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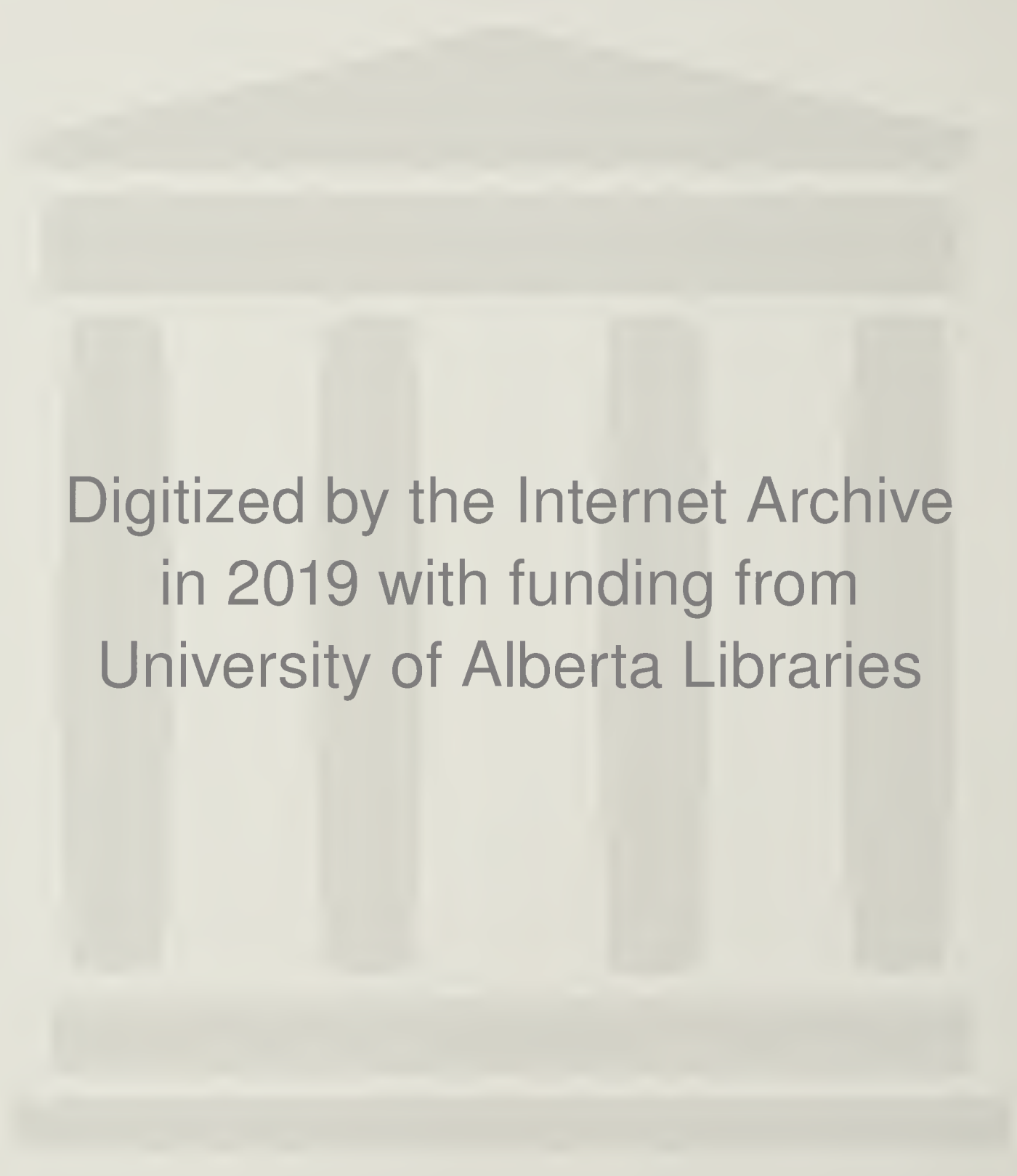


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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled Chaucer's Structural and Thematic Use of Courtly Love submitted by Saviour John Stellini in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.



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Abstract

From his very early literary years, Chaucer realised that the courtly convention could serve his genius both structurally and thematically. The courtly characteristics which Chaucer borrowed mainly from the French are used to function structurally not only in those poems dealing exclusively with a study of the courtly code, but, as will be discussed in chapter I, also in certain dream-visions that have a non-courtly theme.

The primary interest -- hence the main emphasis in this essay -- in a study of Chaucer's treatment of the ethic of courtly love lies, however, with the poet's examination of its nature and its values. Chaucer was well aware that this highly refined religion of love could only exist as a hypothetical ideal, and that from the practical as well as from the moral point of view it was always doomed. By contrasting it with other forms of love, Chaucer consistently exposed the weaknesses of courtly love: as will be explained in Chapter II, Chaucer objectively places courtly love in the perspective of natural love; later on, as will be discussed in Chapter III, Chaucer first implicitly contrasts courtly love with Christian love and then goes on explicitly to condemn it as being detrimental to man's spiritual duties. After initially exposing its limitations and eventually condemning it, Chaucer attempted to offer a practical solution by blending the courtly and the marital systems of love. The development of this idea will be presented in the final chapter.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

CHAUCER'S STRUCTURAL AND THEMATIC USE
OF COURTLY LOVE

by
Saviour John Stellini

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CHAPTER I

STRUCTURAL USE OF COURTLY LOVE

Chaucer makes use of courtly love in two distinct ways. The first approach consists of an adaptation of the courtly conventions in certain poems that do not have for a central theme the subject of courtly love; the second method is concerned with an actual thematic exploration of the ethic of courtly love. Chaucer's thematic investigation of courtly love is not only extensive, but, as will be emphasised in the later chapters, also follows a consistent development. The use of the courtly conventions in poems whose theme is not concerned with an examination of courtly love is found in only two of Chaucer's poems: the Book of the Duchess and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women. It must not be inferred from this, however, that the courtly devices in these two poems serve a mere decorative purpose; on the contrary, as will be explained in this opening chapter, the courtly conventions are here adopted for functional purposes and thus contribute to the meaning of the subject being developed.

It is generally accepted by critics that the Book of the Duchess is an occasional poem written around 1369 to commemorate the death of Blanche, duchess of Lancaster and first wife of Chaucer's patron, John of Gaunt.¹ Chaucer's main concern was therefore to write an elegy. And such, in fact, the poem is; but it is a special kind of elegy. During this early period of his literary career, Chaucer was greatly influenced by French courtly poems, in particular by the Romance of the Rose, a portion of which he

claims to have translated.² On the death of Blanche, Chaucer must have been faced with a dilemma since he was both a mourner and an artist. The death of the lady was a real and sorrowful event, far detached from the world of love inside the familiar paradisaal gardens about which he knew so much. But Chaucer's artistic genius managed to fuse the two experiences together, and the finished product reflects a striking originality in his very first literary creation. For the Book of the Duchess is more than merely an elegy; it is, besides, a eulogy of Blanche and a consolation addressed to her bereaved husband. And Chaucer managed to convey this required impression by making use of the courtly conventions which he had learned from his French predecessors. What he borrows from them is adapted to serve the new purposes required by the theme of death as the cause of an abrupt end to a love relationship.

The poem opens with the conventional reasons for the poet's sleeplessness. The conditions here described--later elaborated in the Proem to the first book of the House of Fame--are just those as, according to medieval dream-theory, would have led any person to dream once he falls asleep.³ But these lines are not just decorative, since they are closely linked to the tone one would expect in an elegy. The impression they leave is that the narrator is in a melancholic mood, precisely the spirit that should serve as a key to the sorrowful event which he is about to narrate. It has been suggested that the cause of the "sickness/That I have suffred this eight yeer" (36-37)⁴ is unrequited love. Various critics have endeavoured to prove that these lines in fact refer to some specific experience in Chaucer's own love life.⁵ But, since parallel situations are frequent in other poems,

it is safer to regard these lines as conventional. However, it is not the cause that really matters, but the intention for including such a painful experience.

The sorrow expressed in the opening lines is highly significant in relation to the essential theme of the poem. First of all, this atmosphere of melancholy will find an echo in the wretchedness of the bereaved lover. Furthermore, since the dreamer assumes the pose of an unhappy lover, he can easily sympathise with the distress of the Man in Black and thus make bold to pursue his apparently naive questioning. Nothing could so perfectly preserve the balance between poet and patron, for, as Bronson explains, "Chaucer cannot afford to forget that he is dealing with a most sensitive area in his patron's personal life."⁶ The dreamer's guise also proves very effective in making the bereaved lover unlock his sorrowing heart and by means of eulogizing his own lady now dead, find inner peace and consolation. Kittredge has explained this point in very clear terms:

The Dreamer knows that the lady is dead, but he wishes to learn more, not from idle curiosity but out of sympathetic eagerness to afford the knight the only help in his power--the comfort of pouring his sad story into compassionate ears.⁷

The poet's woe serves one more important purpose, for it allows the telling of the love-tragedy of Seys and Alcyone, a sad story which knits closely the theme of the three parts in the poem: "She (Alcyone) and the Dreamer are akin in their protracted love-longing, and she and the knight are at one in their grief."⁸

In the poet's search for release from his sleeplessness, he reads a book to distract him. Such a technique was a regular convention of dream-visions, but the content of the book emphasises the theme of death and not

of love. Here we have the story of a faithful wife mourning the death of her husband. This story also points out Chaucer's new departure from the traditional courtly conventions. In the typical courtly love situation where the main concern is the achievement of the lady's love, death is seldom seen to intrude. In the Book of the Duchess however, the tragedy of the wife mourning her dead husband plays an essential functional purpose, for it serves a vital link in both the structure and the content of the poem.⁹ First of all, the Seys-Alcyone story sets the elegiac tone of the whole poem. Besides, it says much to the widower John of Gaunt about the way one should accept the fact of death. In essence, it repeats the implied message of the whole poem: both love and death are real experiences, and the acceptance of death is the only consolation a bereaved lover can find. There is no doubt, that Seys' consolatory words are as much aimed at John of Gaunt as at the suffering Alcyone:

"Awake! let be youre sorwful lyf!
 For in youre sorwe there lyth no red.
 For, certes, swete, I nam but ded;
 Ye shul me never on lyve yse.

 And farewel, swete, my worlde's blysse!
 I praye God youre sorwe lysse.
 To lytel while oure blysse lasteth!"
 (202-211)

The story of Seys and Alcyone is then Chaucer's first offer of consolation to his patron.

What the poet-narrator now wants is sleep, an escape from the sorrow he feels and about which he has read, as well as a rest for his weary body. The story of Seys and Alcyone has left the narrator in a gayer mood because he too has benefited from the book in which he found his own

sorrow reflected in Alcyone's plight; the consolation which the dead husband offers Alcyone and John of Gaunt has also affected the narrator and now he¹⁰ is able to find a pause from his woes in sleep.

As in all other dream visions, the narrator's sleep in this poem leads to a most wondrous dream. But in Chaucer's hands, the dream here described goes much beyond mere conventionality. There is an essential difference from the dreams of his poetic predecessors. Their dreams are usually just devices to get the reader into a kind of phantasy-land peopled by personified abstractions or by stereotyped lovers scarcely more real than the abstractions themselves. Chaucer's use of the dream reflects, as F.N. Robinson has suggested, "the peculiar psychology of the sleeping¹¹ state." This effect is produced partly by the naivete assumed in the dreamer's temperament; for the most part, however, it is due to a number of delicate touches undeniably significant in their total impression: the dreamer riding out of his chamber on a horse; the mysterious Octavian; the brief but most realistic hunting-scene; the whelp leading the dreamer to the pitiful sight of the downcast Man in Black; and especially, the fantastic trees "Of fourty or fifty fadme lengthe" (442). Furthermore, the dream structure as applied here serves a special purpose closely related to the subject of the poem. In the first place, it is most appropriate to the particular occasion being celebrated. To John of Gaunt, the happiness of his love abruptly disrupted by the death of his lady, seems to be now nothing more than a swift dream. All the joys of his life are gone forever, and the only way in which they can live again is in sweet, yet unreal, experiences re-created in his mind as he hears the narrator

describe the dream about the ideal love of the Man in Black, and White, a love relationship that recalls parallels to that which had once existed between John of Gaunt and Blanche. As will be explained later on in this chapter, the re-created relationship between the lover and his lady proves to be the most effective consolation the poet can offer to the bereaved lover. For, in the ideal dream setting where all reminders of common life are excluded, the poet, through his own persona in the dream, leads the knight to relate the past fulfilment of his own love life until the knight freely admits that although his lady is dead she will live forever in his memory (1124-24). If we wonder why this advice, which is the best Chaucer could offer, is not explicitly given, we have to look at the social positions of poet and patron for an explanation. And this also explains why the dream convention as adopted in the Book of the Duchess, serves yet another purpose: it helps to transfer the responsibility for what is written down from the artist's person to the fantasies of dream, and in this way, bearing in mind the decorum necessitated by the different social classes of Chaucer and John of Gaunt, it provides the required aesthetic distance.

Another courtly convention which Chaucer adopted in this poem from the French dream-visions is the May-setting. The poet, now asleep, dreams that he is awakened by the joyous singing of small birds. The spring-descriptions had been widely used before to symbolize the courtly world. Although Chaucer's garden retains to some extent its traditional significance, it is here immediately revitalized, and its symbolic significance in no way hinders our impression that it almost seems real in spite of its

dreamlike qualities. Before the dreamer meets the Man in Black, a whelp appears from nowhere and leads him through the enchanting meadow into the dense wood. The singing birds, the list of trees and flowers, and all the other magnificent details in the garden of Guillaume de Lorris' portion of the Romance of the Rose are also present in Chaucer's setting. The garden described in this poem almost rivals Eden and is said to be fit even for the gods:

Doun by a floury grene wente
 Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete,
 With floures fele, faire under fete,
 And litel used, hyt semed thus;
 For both Flora and Zephirus,
 They two that make floures growe
 Had mad her dwellynge ther, I trowe;
 For hit was, on to beholde,
 As thogh the erthe envye wolde
 To be gayer than the heven,
 To have moo floures, swiche seven,
 As in the welken sterres bee.
 (398-409)

Chaucer's major departure from the May-setting convention is evident in his inclusion of the hunting-scene. The sound of a hunting horn calls the dreamer to the fantastic chase of the "hert". Although in Chaucer's day the sport of hunting was usually associated with the courtly world, the presence of the hunting-scene in this poem is closely related to the theme of death. By the time the dreamer rides out of his room to the forest, the hart is lost and a "forloyn" is sounded, suspending the hunt for the time being. The symbolic significance of the "hert-huntynge" scene becomes clearer when we realize that, as it is used in this poem, it serves as a constant background motif to the new kind of hunt under-

taken by the dreamer in his attempt to make the Man in Black recapture his "hert" which had been lost with the death of Blanche. When the dreamer finally succeeds in consoling the lover, thus in a way offering him some measure of joy in his heart, the two hunts are brought to an end, "al was doon,/For that tyme, the hert-huntyng" (1312-13).

The dreamer's hunt for the knight's "hert" takes the form of a dialogue between the two men. It is in the treatment of the recreated love relationship as an ideal courtly amour that the elegy divides itself into a eulogy of Blanche and an instrument of consolation offered to the knight. All the precepts of courtly love form the basis for the love relationship between the Man in Black and White:¹² "The origin and progress of the sorrowful Knight's love affair are clearly conceived in those traditional terms that have their ultimate source in the Romance of the Rose."¹³ But since the poet is not exploring the nature and values of courtly love, why does he adopt all the traditional courtly conventions in this poem? He does so to portray an ideal love relationship which satisfies not only the artist for its poetic merits, but his patron as well, since it also represents in retrospect the real love that once existed between John of Gaunt and Blanche. And this happy effect is achieved by making structural use of all that was beautiful in the courtly conventions. Although the use of the courtly conventions does not necessarily imply a departure from the world of married life to adultery, in this poem Chaucer offers no evidence to show that the Man in Black, and White were ever married.¹⁴ It must be noted however, that since the element of sensuality is greatly diminished, Chaucer must have kept closely in mind the real relationship that had existed

between man and woman outside the literary world.

The dreamer knows all about the sorrows of the Man in Black since he overhears the lover's typical lament:

"I have of sorwe so gret won
 That joye gete I never non,
 Now that I see my lady bryght,
 Which I have loved with al my myght,
 Is fro me ded and ys agoon.
 Allas, deth, what ayleth the,
 That thou noldest have taken me,
 Whan thou toke my lady swete,
 That was so fair, so fresh, so fre,
 So good, that men may wel se
 Of al goodnesse she had no mete!"
 (475-86)

According to the courtly conventions, the worst pain and misery that could happen to a lover is the absence of the beloved. In this poem, the pain of absence is caused by death. Both in the love story of Seys and Alcyone, and in that of the knight and White, there is present the heart-ache of the bereaved lover (in the case of Ovid's adopted story the bereaved is the wife) and the unsatisfied desire to see the lost one again. By means of supernatural powers, Seys appears to Alcyone and her pain is eased; the dreamer intends to relieve the sorrows of the knight by subtly encouraging him to make his beloved appear again in his mind. In answer to a series of questions put by the dreamer, the Man in Black relates how from his youth he had been chosen to serve the god of Love (759-68) until his youthful idealism turned into real passion at the first sight of his lady (834-41). It is at this point that the eulogy of Blanche begins: the lover describes the attributes of White not only in highly idealistic terms, but also in minute detail. Although this part of the poem relies most heavily on borrow-

ings,¹⁵ Chaucer integrates the details so skillfully into the whole portrait that it appears as if the dead lady has been brought back to life not only in the lover's memory but also in the reader's imagination. The portrait of Blanche must occupy the larger part of the poem (820-1087) since it functions as the focal point inside the elegy: its beauty helps to cure the lover's heart, and it can only achieve this effect if, as Bronson remarks, "the poet comes not to bury Blanche, but to praise her."¹⁶

It is not difficult to understand why a lady as perfect as the one described should wound the heart of the knight. In fact, as he himself says, from the very moment he saw her, the knight's one wish was to love and serve her (1054-79). The dreamer's pretended stupidity provokes the lover to continue relating in the traditional courtly manner the worship and service he had to suffer before convincing the lady of his honest intentions:

"So whan my lady knew al this,
My lady yaf me al hooly
The noble yifte of hir mercy--
Savyng hir worship, by al weyes--
Dredles, I mene noon other weyes."
(1268-72)

The effect of fulfilled love on the knight is very interesting because at the end of the recalled love-suit he is to experience a similar feeling. Having been accepted by the lady, the Man in Black remembers that,

". . . I was as blyve
Reysed, as fro deth to lyve,
Of al happes the alderbeste,
The gladdest, and the moste at reste."
(1277-80)

Now, that his beloved has been brought back to live forever in his memory,

he is once again, "Reysed, as fro deth to lyve" (1278). The dreamer's treatment has helped to cure the pains of lost love; to the woeful lover, the dead lady will always live in his mind: "Nay, while I am alyve her,/I nyl foryete hir never moo" (1124-24). This is the greatest consolation Chaucer could offer to his patron, a consolation which will eventually turn into a resigned acceptance of human life, once the Man in Black freely admits the physical death of his beloved: "She ys ded!" "Nay!" "Yis, be my trouthe!" (1309). Bronson explains this sentiment in one short and concrete statement: "And his (Chaucer's) lesson is the age-old one of resignation and human acceptance of life and death, of thankfulness for past felicity, of the comfort of precious memories, of the dignity of self-mastery in spite of Fortune's 'false draughtes dyvers'."¹⁷

Chaucer's ability to discern the fitness of the courtly conventions for the particular purpose of an elegy was indeed a considerable achievement. Furthermore, as used in this poem, the courtly devices go beyond conventions; their functional contribution helps in a large degree to minimize the usual sorrowful tone accompanying an elegy, thus enabling Chaucer to offer to his patron, what C.S. Lewis has called, "the abiding impression. . . of health and happiness."¹⁸

At about the middle period of his poetic career,¹⁹ Chaucer once again made use of the courtly conventions as a part of the structure in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, another poem whose subject is not concerned with a thematic examination of the ethic of courtly love. As in the Book of the Duchess, here too the courtly devices are adopted to fulfil a functional purpose, thereby contributing to the meaning of the particular

subject being developed. On the one hand, Chaucer's intention for writing the Prologue to the Legends was to justify the theme of a number of stories about certain women who, according to the Middle Ages, had either accepted death rather than prove unfaithful in love, or had suffered great hardships at the hands of their lovers; on the other hand, the Prologue also serves to explain Chaucer's new structural framework adopted in order to unify the theme of the nine legends. It becomes evident, therefore, that the primary concern in the Prologue centres on Chaucer's own poetic artistry.

Since the poet decides to adopt the courtly conventions for presenting his theme, he naturally goes back to the form of the dream-vision. But, as will be shown in the remainder of this chapter, Chaucer's maturer artistic genius enables him to modify much that had usually been conventional in such poems. The very opening lines offer a departure from his own past dream-visions. Whereas Chaucer had earlier introduced dream-visions with a mixed presentation of medieval dream-lore, the narrator's troubled state, and the reading of a book followed by sleep and an ensuing dream, in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, such expedients are abandoned. In the opening part of the poem (G, 1-40),²⁰ Chaucer establishes an antithesis between authority and experience. This does not imply that he dismisses authority as useless; on the contrary, he presents a very strong defence in favour of books before finally acknowledging that on certain occasions studying should be laid aside. He admits that we must always credit what we read in books regardless of whether we have personally experienced it or not. He presents this view for two important reasons: first of all, it affords the poet^{an opportunity} to present the argument in the very first lines on the existence or non-existence of the

joys of heaven and the pains of hell:

A thousand sythes have I herd men telle
 That there is joye in hevене and peyne in helle,
 And I acorde wel that it be so;
 But natheles, this wot I wel also,
 That there ne is non that dwelleth in this contre,
 That eyther hath in helle or hevене ybe
 Ne may of it non other weyes witen
 But as he hath herd seyde or founde it writen;
 For by assay there may no man it preve.
 (G, 1-9)

The conception of the Christian heaven and hell is not precisely the courtly one, but nonetheless, as had already been shown by other courtly writers, it accommodated itself quite comfortably to the courtly religion.²¹ The question of heaven and hell is also closely linked to the fate of the women, who, as depicted in the Legends, gave up their lives upholding their religion of love. Thus, since Cleopatra was faithful to Antony and in fact died as a martyr of love, she went to Paradise because it was part of the code of courtly love that no true lover could go to hell. The other reason for the poet's absolute trust in books is more important in terms of the supposed offence he had committed against the god of Love. In his defence, the poet can argue that he was led astray by following blindly the content of the "olde bokes", in this particular case presumably Jean de Meun's portion of the Romance of the Rose, and Boccaccio's Il Filostrato. Although Chaucer makes a strong case for the validity and worth of books, in this poem he abandons the traditional convention of summarizing one of them, for, as he says, this is

. . . the joly tyme of May,
 Whan that I here the smale foules synge,
 And that the floures gynne for to sprynge.
 Farwel my stodye, as lastynge that sesoun!
 (G, 36-39)

The poet walks in the meadow freshness, admiring the flowers blooming in spring and in particular "these floures white and red,/Such as men callen daysyes in our toun" (G, 42-43). This description of the May setting outside the dream is another change in the usual convention; the usual garden in dream-visions is the one inside the dream itself. In the Book of the Duchess and in the Parliament of Fowls, the poet's reading of an "auctoritee" causes the dream, which in turn produces the created literary product of the dream-vision; such is not the case here. In this poem it is the waking experience of the real garden with its daisies that inspire the dream-vision. The garden which the poet used to frequent during the month of May becomes in his dreaming experience the ideal garden of the literary convention. The significance of the specific flower is even more important. The real daisy is projected in the dream as the humanized figure of Alceste. On account of the penance she imposes upon the poet, Alceste is moreover responsible for the poet's composition of the nine legends. The poet is here undoubtedly experimenting with the usual courtly conventions that he had used in his earlier dream-visions. It is experience, the garden and the daisy, that inspires the dream, and the result is not only the writing of the dream-vision, but in effect, a return to "auctoritee" since the legends rely for their stories on classical authors.

It has been frequently argued that since Chaucer refers to the daisy in terms that a lover usually applies when speaking of his lady, he has therefore a real lady in mind. ²² An allegorical interpretation of the daisy is of course highly plausible and even possibly significant, but any attempt to specify a lady by name adds no further meaning to the theme.

The fact is, that the lady is really present in the poem itself; the great feeling expressed for the daisy is, in the dream, passed on to the metamorphosed flower now embodied in the figure of Alceste. Whether Alceste represents Queen Anne or whether she represents Joan of Kent is not significant to the scope of the Prologue. Apart from the importance of the daisy on account of its relation to Alceste and the Legends, the mention of this specific flower is also significant because it evokes some of the literary associations present in the Prologue. According to Tatlock, the poet's devotion to the daisy "comes specially from Deschamps' Lai de Franchise (where the "Marguerite" represents originally a lady so named)--a poem written in 1385, and communicated to Chaucer at latest in 1386." ²³ It is usually believed that during Chaucer's day there was both in England and France a literary cult that championed the beauty of the daisy (called in French the marguerite) which had largely supplanted the earlier cult of the rose as the one true flower of love. The connotations of love with which the daisy is associated, anticipate, on the one hand, the figure of Alceste who is not only the embodied daisy herself but also represents an ideal follower of the god's religion, and on the other, the good women in the legends, further exemplars of Love's devotees.

Another literary convention, also closely related to the world of the court, is introduced in the Prologue when Chaucer pauses for a while to announce, presumably to his aristocratic listeners, that he never meant to praise the flower more than the leaf. To his hearers this inclusion would have had a meaning which to the modern reader is lost. It is generally believed that the relative attributes of the flower and the

leaf were a subject of considerable debate during this time.²⁴ In fact, the title of a fifteenth century poem, The Flower and the Leaf, strongly implies that this controversy was even carried on into the following century. The ladies and gentlemen of the court presumably played a game by dividing lovers into two kinds: the chaste and faithful were regarded as the followers of the Leaf; the followers of the Flower were those who were considered to be the idle and the pleasure-loving.²⁵ The poet, possibly because he considered himself outside the courtly social world, refuses to take any side, but nonetheless continues to glorify the daisy until his highest devotion is expressed in the dream where the transformation of the flower into queen Alceste is explained by the god of Love (G, 486-522). The poet-daisy relationship is furthermore significant because in the dream it is the flower-turned-Alceste who appropriately intercedes to save her devotee from the wrath of the god of Love.

In the G. Prologue the dream starts earlier than in the F-version. One result of this change is that now the famous description of the beautiful morning and the charmingly humanized birds, form a part of the creative concept of the dream itself. In making this change, Chaucer follows more closely the traditional construction of the dream-vision, although in this poem the dream garden has been inspired by the real garden. Furthermore, by making it possible to provide the god of Love with the usual ideal setting, the poet consolidates the development of the poem. The god of Love is seen leading a beautiful woman clothed all in green and crowned like a daisy; in fact, as the dreamer later learns from the god of Love, she is the daisy of his worship outside the dream. She and the god are followed by a company of ladies

who, like those described in the legends arising out of the dream, are "trewe of love. . . echon" (G, 193). The exquisite ballad which these ladies sing also anticipates many of the names of women included in the

²⁶
Legends. The god of Love then fixes a stern eye at the poet-dreamer, and remarks that he would prefer to have a worm in his presence^{rather} than Geoffrey, and accuses him of having,

" . . . translated the Romauns of the Rose,
That is an heresyge ageyns my lawe,
And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe,"
(G, 254-57)

and of having

" . . . mad in Englysh ek the bok
How that Crisseyde Troylus forsok,
In shewynge how that wemen han don mis."
(G, 264-66)

The god continues by reminding Chaucer that the poet owns a whole library of books telling the lives of women, "and ever a hundred good ageyn oon badde" (G, 277), and goes on to ask:

"What seith Valerye, Titus, or Claudyan?
What seith Jerome agayns Jovynyan?"

Chaucer here seems to be poking fun at the god of Love, for in the Middle Ages, Valerye (Walter Map) and St. Jerome were perhaps regarded as the most famous and the most effective anti-feminists. In fact, it appears that the god of Love does not know what he is talking about even when he brands The Romance of the Rose and Troilus and Criseyde as two heretical works against his religion; although Chaucer is not given a chance to answer the god's accusations, he makes it clear that the god of Love has missed the point completely:

"They oughte rather with me for to holde,
 For that I of Criseyde wrot or tolde,
 Or of the Rose; what so myn auctor mente,
 Algate, God wot, it was myn entente
 To forthere trouthe in love and it cheryce,
 And to be war fro falsenesse and fro vice
 By swich ensauple this was my menyngge."
 (G, 458-64)

Such a depiction of the god of Love is far removed from any description which Chaucer had previously given to the god. And the alteration of the nature of the god is seen further in the way he behaves during and after Alceste's speech. Alceste's long talk (G, 318-431) takes the form of a defence for the poet's actions and also of an address to the god of Love. Her case for the poet is based on the assertion that the poet, in writing the poems for which he has been accused, is not really to blame since he has merely fumbled good intentions:

"He may translate a thyng in no malyce,
 But for he useth bokes for to make,
 And taketh non hed of what matere he take,
 Therfore he wrot the Rose and ek Crisseyde
 Of innocence, and nyste what he seyde."
 (341-45)

She endeavours to soften the charge further by recounting Chaucer's other poems in which he faithfully obeyed the god of Love (G, 405-409). At the same time, Alceste also addresses the god of Love, telling him that it is the duty of a deity to show mercy and pity towards sinners. The god of Love is sufficiently mellowed, and allows Alceste to pass sentence on the poet herself. Cupid's usual despotic nature has been changed to the extent that, by the end of the Prologue he even smiles (G, 486) and holds a light conversation (G, 486-543) with the man whom he had earlier branded as "my

mortal fo" (G, 248).

The god's decision to leave the poet at the mercy of Alceste is very appropriate since the pretended crimes have been committed against women, and, as Tatlock puts it, "Alceste is the Good Woman par excellence."²⁷ Furthermore, it affords the passing of the very poetic sentence which Chaucer needs in order to justify the thematic grouping of the legends,²⁸ most of which, apparently, had already been written. Because Alceste in her role as an intercessor, has revealed a most merciful nature, she imposes upon Chaucer a relatively light penance:

"Thow shalt, whil that thow livest, yer by yere,
The most partye of thy tyme spende
In makynge of a glorious legende
Of goode women, maydenes and wyves,
That were trewe in lovyng al here lyves;
And telle of false men that hem betrayen,
That al here lyf ne don nat but assayen
How manye wemen they may don a shame."
(G, 473-79)

No penance could be more fitting for a poet; the poet has been given a chance to amend for his sins by writing a martyrology of Cupid's saints, that is, of women who were good according to the standards of the religion of Love. The Legend of Good Women is to be in a sense a palinode pertaining to the religion of love. According to this religion, it is no less a work of piety to write what will glorify one of Love's martyrs than to glorify a saint of the Church.

The use of Christian imagery in the Prologue, although minimized²⁹ in the G-version, is pervasive: the poet is charged with spreading "heresy" against the religion of the god of Love; Alceste, the intercessor, bears a strong resemblance in character and office to the Blessed Virgin; Cupid's

mother is "Seynt Venus"; Cupid is begged to give "grace"; finally the poet is given a "penance". The blending of the Christian and the courtly imageries as a convention in love poems goes back to the days of the troubadours.³⁰ But, as applied in the Prologue it goes beyond mere parody of the real religion, since it helps the reader to anticipate the kind of stories to be composed as a result of the "penance". The tales of the martyrs of Love are not just tales; they are legends. Just as the stories of Christian saints are referred to as legends, the stories of those who gave up their lives for Love are therefore legends of the saints of the religion of Cupid. The continuous use of Christian terms in the Prologue prepares us for the nine stories aptly referred to by the Man of Law, "the Seintes Legende of Cupide" (II, 61).

Chaucer's main concern in the Prologue is really the justification for the theme about the nine faithful women and also for grouping them together in a new structural framework. The courtly conventions are again borrowed, but, as explained above, they are adapted in such a way that they help to explain the point that Chaucer is exposing.

The above examination of the Book of the Duchess and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women has attempted to assess Chaucer's ability to adopt the traditional courtly conventions in the structure of two poems which do not have for their theme an exploration of the ethic of courtly love. There can be no doubt however, that as adopted by Chaucer, the courtly conventions add to the clarity of the theme's significance. This explains why both poems reflect a high degree of artistic finesse and originality despite their French borrowings.

CHAPTER II

COURTLY LOVE AND NATURAL LOVE

Chaucer's earliest poem which presents a thematic exploration of love is the Parliament of Fowls. The traditional courtly conventions are once more adopted in this poem, but here they function as a part of a theme which, unlike that of the Book of the Duchess and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, is also concerned with the subject of courtly love. In the Parliament of Fowls, the poet is continuously pondering the nature and effects of earthly love from subtly differing points of view, one of which is courtly love. The narrator's opening comments on the conflicting nature of love, the book on the dream of Scipio with its perspective of heavenly values and the love of the public weal, the suffering in the licentious Temple of Venus, the relationship between Venus and Nature, the varied opinions of the birds--all these diverse elements focus on the theme of love.

The conventionally phrased description of Love in the first two stanzas of the poem show that Chaucer is thinking of a special kind of love, the courtly kind:

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
Th' assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
The dredful joye, alwey that slit so yerne:
Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge
Astoniyeth with his wonderful werkynge
So sore, iwis, that whan I on hym thynke,
Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke.

For al be that I knowe nat Love in dede,
 Ne wot how that he quiteth folk here hyre,
 Yit happeth me ful ofte in bokes reede
 Of his myrakles and his crewel yre.
 There rede I wel he wol be lord and syre;
 I dar nat seyn, his strokes been so sore,
 But "God save swich a lord!"--I can na moore.
 (1-14)

The use of contrasts and the paradoxical traits of love present in these lines will acquire deeper significance as the poem progresses: the balanced lines foreshadow the antithetical inscriptions over the gate, which symbolize the loves in the Temple of Venus and in the park of Nature; the kind of love described in the above quoted stanzas also look forward to the formal and artificial pleadings of the courtly eagles, and also to the outcome of such pleadings. The opening lines are furthermore significant because the troubling nature of love makes the narrator uneasy, giving him a feeling of uncertainty which, in pondering, only worsens his state (4-7). He confesses, as he does elsewhere,¹ to his own inexperience in the matters of love, and adds that the little he knows about love is from books. Now that he finds himself confused and troubled, he turns again to "auctoritee" to learn "a certeyn thing". The narrator does not tell us what kind of thing he wants to learn, but, since we know that his uneasiness has been provoked by the conflicting nature of Love as described in the first two stanzas, it is plausible to assume that what he wants to learn is concerned with love.

The book he reads is Cicero's Somnium Scipionis in which he learns that man's earthly duty in order to achieve salvation is to love the "commune profyt" (47). Scipio's experiences seem little to the narrator's quest, and he admits that he has not found "the certeyn thyng" for

which he was searching:

For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde
And ek I nadde that thyng that I wolde.
(90-91)

Nonetheless, the summary of Scipio's dream is highly significant to the poem's theme, for it strongly affirms the contrast between "pleyn felicitee" and "worldly vanyte".² In the Parliament of Fowls, the contrast between earthly and heavenly values is strongly enforced when the dream of Scipio is linked to the "dredful joye" of the unstable human love that is considered in the opening lines, and to the narrator's dream of the garden of Love, where "commune profyt" is forgotten in the pursuit of selfish and fleeting pleasures.³ Furthermore, the description of the punishment given to "the brekers of the lawe. . ./And likerous folk" (78-79) will acquire significance when the poet describes the tormented lovers in the Temple of Venus.

After having read the Somnium Scipionis all day, the narrator falls asleep. It was the common practice of dream-visions--indeed of medieval dream-lore--to have the activity which preceded sleep inspire the ensuing dream.⁴ And this is what happens here: Africanus appears and speaks to the dreamer:

"Thow hast the so wel born
In lokynge of myn olde bok totorn
Of which Macrobye roughete nat a lyte,
That sumdel of thy labour wolde I quyte."
(109-112)

At last it seems that the poet's search is to be rewarded. The poet's invocation to Cytherea (113-19) with its descriptive terms that look back to

the first two stanzas and forward to the lovers in the garden, also seems to imply that the dream which the poet had experienced proved fruitful to his search.⁵ But there seems to be little connection between the moral subject of Scipio's dream and the dream of Venus and Nature in the park of Love. Africanus leads the dreamer, not, as might be expected, to a sober view of future life, but into an earthly garden of Love where all the values judged are concerned with man in relation to himself and to his life on earth. J.A.W. Bennett points out this great distance that separates the subjects of the two dreams:

For however we interpret the succeeding scenes we cannot establish more than an antithetical and oblique relation between them and African's discourse in the Proem. There the emphasis is on the immaterial joys of heaven, here on the joys and sorrows of a very material earth. Scipio's dream is chiefly concerned with Eternity and the life of the spirit; Chaucer's with Nature and the impulses of the flesh.⁶

In the moral universe, Africanus had authoritatively announced fixed rules of reward and punishment. In the world of Love, the dreamer is about to witness duality and insecurity. The very gate leading to the land of Love presents two ambiguous warnings which prepare us for the perplexing natures of love to be discovered in the park.

The device of the inscriptions at the entrance was suggested by Dante's Divina Commedia, where an ominous warning was written over the gates of hell.⁷ In The Parliament of Fowls the antithetical inscriptions are however present on two halves of the same gate--Heaven and Hell seem now to be one, for this is the entrance to the land of Love where torments and happiness become parts of its dual nature, so well expressed in the oxymoron "dredful joye" at the beginning of the poem. The first inscription,

with its imagery of happiness, health, and regeneration in love,

Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;
Thorgh me men gon unto the welle of grace
There grene and lusty May shal evere endure,
(128-30)

looks forward to the vigorous and cheerful atmosphere surrounding the park of Nature--she too heals and cures the love-desires of every creature who follows her ordered principles:

"Ye knowe wel how, seynt Valentynes day,
By my statut and thorgh my governaunce,
Ye come for to cheese--and fle youre wey--
Youre makes, as I prike yow with plesaunce."
(385-89)

The words that "blak iwriten were" express a decisively barren and negative aspect of Love:

"Thorgh me men goon," than spak that other side,
Unto the mortal strokes of the spere
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
Ther nevere tre shal fruyt ne leves bere,
This strem you ledeth to the soreful were
There as the fish in prysoun is al drye."
(134-39)

There is no doubt that this description prepares us for the unfruitful and disastrous extremes of courtly love as expressed in the licentious environment of Venus's Temple and in the tragic pictures of those who had followed her kind of love. The emphasis in this inscription on barren and unfruitful love, also points ahead to the frustrated courtly eagles who, as a result of artificial pleadings, are, like "the fish in prysoun. . . al drye", also left high and dry.

These two inscriptions have left the dreamer as uneasy as the

narrator had been when he had defined the paradoxical behaviour of Love. But Africanus puts an end to the dreamer's doubts and hesitancy, leads him in by the hand and reassures him that no part of the warnings applies to him since, "thow of love hast lost thy tast, I gesse" (160).⁸ Earlier too, the poet disavowed personal experience in matters of love. The poet has very good artistic reasons for adopting the pose of a non-participant in love, for his aim in this poem is to put forward an objective and impersonal treatment of a perplexing theme. Chaucer's guide takes him directly into a park resembling an earthly paradise. Although detailed descriptions of paradisaal gardens are very common in courtly love poems, the park described in the Parliament of Fowls symbolizes much more than the garden of Guillaume de Lorris in the Romance of the Rose does: the list of trees, the colourful flowers, the fish and streams, and the angelic harmony of the birds (172-203), represent not only the exclusive world of the court circle, but the whole of the world as it is constantly replenished by Nature's fecundity. In fact, this park is Nature's own world in which order and freedom permit both the good and the bad to coexist. And the dreamer himself is enraptured by the first impression of this park: "But, Lord, so I was glad and wel begoon!" (171).

As the dreamer walks in these beautiful surroundings, he sees Cupid, and our attention is once again focused on the main theme of the poem, the kind of dream that the invocation to Cytherea had led us to anticipate. Cupid is described in terms that immediately send us back to the powerful lord and sire named at the beginning of the poem. His arrows, "Some for to sle, and some to wounde and kerve" (217), are promised in the

portal warnings, some to be cured by fruitful love "Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure" (128); but those invited to follow Disdayn and Daunger into barren love are "mortal strokes" (135). In this poem, Cupid represents the traditional significance as the god symbolizing polite ardour;⁹ his mother Venus, as will be shown later, in the context of courtly love usually stands for sexual appetite. This distinction between the two deities is clearly explained by Bennett: "There is nothing to suggest that Chaucer here gave a signification to Cupid fundamentally different from the traditional l'amour du coeur--the civilized, courtly emotion, as distinct from the universal appetite, represented by Venus."¹⁰

The two stanzas full of the stock abstract personifications of courtly love allegory (218-30) gradually lead us to the Temple of Venus. It is significant that these abstractions should dwell inside the artificial courtly world, in this poem represented by the Temple and its neighbourhood, since the love which Venus stands for is an artificiality. In order to survive, this artificial courtly world must, like the Temple, stand apart, isolated from the reminders of concrete everyday life so strongly suggested by the debate of the birds in the park of Nature. At first it seems as if these abstract figures represent all that is pleasurable and refined in love--Youth, Array, Gentillesse, Beauty, and Delight--but the picture grows more sinister as the other unfold--Craft, Foolhardiness, Flattery, Jealousy--for now we are very close to Venus's domain in which artificial love is depicted in all its ugliness. Around her Temple, wanton and dishevelled girls dance all the year round (232-35); on top of the Temple, hundreds of pairs of white doves, symbolizing amorous desire, are

seated (237-38); in front of the Temple door are stationed Peace and Patience (239-43). According to Bennett, Peace signifies "the tranquillity that love requires for its enjoyment," while Patience signifies "disappointment and sterility rather than glad submission or eventual fruition."¹¹

Inside the Temple of Venus, the dreamer hears the sorrowful sighs of desperate lovers who burn with desire in flames kindled by Jealousy; the god Priapus, symbol of lust, naked and grotesque, is followed by the description of Venus herself:

And in a prive corner in disport
 Fond I Venus and hire porter Richesse,
 That was ful noble and hautayn of hyre port.
 Derk was that place, but afterward lightnesse
 I saw a lyte, unnethe it myghte be lesse,
 And on a bed of gold she lay to rest,
 Til that the hote sonne gan to weste.

Hyre gilte heres with a golden thred
 Ibounden were, untressed as she lay,
 And naked from the brest unto the hed
 Men myghte hire sen; and, sothly for to say,
 The remenaunt was wel kevered to my pay,
 Ryght with a subtyl coverchef of Valence--
 Ther was no thikkere cloth of no defense.

(260-73)

There can be no doubt about what kind of Venus Chaucer was referring to in these stanzas: she is meant to signify lascivious enticement, and Chaucer's choice of terms makes this clearly evident: the emphasis on seclusion and darkness, her bed of gold with a hint that she rests only till sunset, since night is the time for passion, her loose-hanging hair, her titillating array--there could hardly be a more erotic figure than the one described. In order to explain the presence of concupiscent

Venus in the pleasant garden where Nature rules supreme, we have to go back to Venus's original nature. According to Alanus de Insulis' De Planctu Naturae, the function of the proper Venus was to be the sub-vicar of Nature representing legitimate sexual desire directed towards the proper ends of marriage:

In the outskirt world I stationed Venus, who is skilled in the knowledge of making, as under-deputy of my work, in order that she, under my judgement and guidance, and with the assisting activity of her husband Hymen and her son Cupid, by labouring at the various formation of the living things of earth and regularly applying their productive hammers to their anvils might weave together the line of human race in unwearied continuation to the end. . . .¹²

Alanus also explains how Venus abandoned her proper function by breaking off her marriage and then committing adultery with Antigamus (anti-marriage) and thus came to signify, as she does in this poem, the corruption of what was originally natural and good in sexual desire.

The two petitioners kneeling in the temple represent all the youths who beg for satisfaction in their love struggles; this immediately leads us to the victims of Venus's war against Diana, goddess of chastity.¹³ The adulterous or lustful love-stories painted inside the walls of the Temple reveal the inevitable tragedy which awaits all those who are blinded by the lures of Venus and her corrupted love. These are the kind of people who represent the breakers of the law--as concupiscent Venus does--the lecherous folk who, according to the Somnium Scipionis, were doomed to "whirle aboute th'erthe alwey in peyne" (80).¹⁴

The dreamer has come a long way in his search, but so far his mind is still occupied with that same "busy hevynesse" that had puzzled him when he was still awake. In the Somnium Scipionis he had found an

account of eternal happiness for those who love the "commune profyt" rounded off with a stern warning on the fate of lecherous folk and breakers of the law; in the dream he has passed from a vision of a healthy and temperate earthly garden to a vision of the miserable end of the lecherous devotees of Venus who spend themselves in inordinate passion.

The dreamer must continue his search and he is "solaced" when he abandons the stuffy and tragic atmosphere inside the Temple of Venus. Out once more in the open freshness of the paradisaal garden he sees in immediate juxtaposition the sunlike beauty of Nature. The shady aura of Venus is eclipsed by the brightness and beneficence of this queen:

Tho was I war wher ther sat a queene
That, as of lyght the somer sonne shene
Passeth the sterre, right so over mesure
So fayrer was than any creature.

And in a launde, upon a hil of floures,
Was set this noble goddess Nature.
Of braunches were here halles and here boures
Iwrought after here cast and here mesure;
Ne ther nas foul that cometh of engendrure
That they ne were prest in here presence,
To take hire dom and yeve hire audyence.
(298-308)

The throne of Nature is a flower-decked hill, a symbol of her fertility, and unlike Venus, she does not hide in a murky temple--her abode encompasses the whole area of the beautiful park. Chaucer's concept of Nature is taken, as he himself admits, from Alanus: "And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde,/Devyseth Nature of aray and face" (316-317). In De Planctu Naturae, Nature is represented as a force to which God relegated some of his power, as "the vicaire of the almighty Lord" (379) who may forever lead all creatures to their proper function of harmonious replenishment.¹⁵ And this is

exactly her role in The Parliament of Fowls.

First of all she conduces everyone to partake of the fruits of natural love. This is what Nature herself says when she addresses the birds:

"Ye knowe wel how, seynt Valentynes day,
By my statut and thorgh my governaunce,
Ye come for to cheese--and fle youre wey--
Youre makes, as I prike you with plesaunce;
But natheles, my ryghtful ordenaunce
May I nat lete for al this world to wynne,
That he that most is worthi shal begynne."
(386-92)

She presides over the parliament because it represents the time for general mating through natural love, and it is by such love that Nature replenishes the earth. In the Temple, on the other hand, love had turned into mere passion and had become an end in itself. All the lovers whose stories were depicted on the walls are rewarded with barrenness and death, since their doctrine is based on unnatural vice. Under Nature, on the other hand, love is to be a harmonious and mutual expression, for she invites the birds to choose "after (their) kynde, everich as (they) lyketh" (401). For Nature, unlike Venus, is no arbitrary goddess; under her care love is not exclusively of one special kind. She governs, as she herself says, "by my statut and thorgh my governaunce" (387), and by "my ryghtful ordenaunce" (390), and in her park are to be found assembled submissively before her every fowl "that cometh of engendrure" (306). Even the doves that had perched on top of the temple of Venus; indeed, even corrupted Venus herself, are included in the park of Nature, for, as explained earlier, Nature welcomes under her aegis everything and everybody. The formel

herself, even though she refuses to serve either Cupid or Venus, admits that she knows all about their kind of love. This is why we should not be surprised to find in the assembly birds of a hostile nature, or of an evil nature, or even courtly birds--all creatures are a part of Nature, regardless of their individual qualities.

As well, Nature is the goddess of order and unity, which take the form of a hierarchy. Thus each class of birds is assigned "his owne place" which is accepted and not enforced, since it comes from Nature's "ordenaunce":

That is to seyn, the foules of ravyne
 Were hyst set, and thanne the foules smale
 That eten, as hem Nature wolde enclyne,
 As worm or thyng of which I telle no tale;
 And water-foul sat lowest in the dale;
 But foul that lyveth by seed sat on the grene,
 And that so fele that wonder was to sene.
 (323-29)

Nature's concern for the orderliness of all things is strongly emphasised by the poet himself who dwells on her unifying powers before Nature even starts to speak:

Nature, the vicaire of the almyghty Lord,
 That hot, cold, hevy, lyght, moyst, and dreye
 Hath knyht by evene noubres of acord,
 In esy voys began to speke. . .
 (379-82)

The melody of the paradisal garden was Nature's own harmony (197-203), itself an echo of the divine harmony of the spherical music of the *Somnium Scipionis* (60-64) and also an anticipation of the harmony expressed in the roundel of the lower birds who are rewarded for following Nature's "ryghtful ordenaunce" in love (680-92). And all this musical symbolism relating to Nature's harmony finds a striking contrast in the "swogh" of the tormented lovers

in the Temple of Venus, and also in the confusion in the debate itself resulting from the artificial pleas of the courtly eagles.

Nature's insistence on the hierarchical order is also manifest in the way she calls upon the birds to commence their wooing:

"The tersel egle, as that ye know wel,
The foul royal, above yow in degre,
.
He shal first chese and speken in his gyse.

And after hym by ordre shul ye chese,
After youre kynðe, everich as yow lyketh,
And, as youre hap is, shul ye wyne or lese."
(393-402)

But before the wooing gets under way, Nature is yet to reveal more of her "governaunce". First of all, she insists that the formel is to have free choice among those who love her. Nature herself praises the beauty and high degree of the royal eagle, but she insists that the final answer is to be the formel's prerogative (408-10); this idea is further reiterated after the birds have all expressed their opinions:

Thanne wol I don hire this favour, that she
Shal han right hym on whom hire herte is set,
And he hire that his herte hath on hire knet.
(626-28)

Nature will have no forced match-making, consequently the love that she endorses will prove fruitful and happy since it is based on the free choice of both lovers. Furthermore, Nature's express condition that love must be mutual is also significant because only such a love will bring the perfect bliss promised by the golden inscription at the entrance to the park of Love.

In her first address to the birds, Nature makes it clear that

each lover should choose his "make" or "feere" in order to procreate by legitimate and natural pleasure (388-90). This is, of course, in accordance with her function. Had Chaucer intended Nature to differentiate between "sovereign lady" and "make" or "feere", he could easily have made the distinction. It is, in fact, the courtly suitors who make the distinction, for the royal tercel at once rejects Nature's terms: "Unto my soverayn lady, and not my fere,/I chese" (416-17); the distinction is also implied by the third tercel when he speaks of the birds' impatience: "For every foul cryeth out to ben ago/Forth with his make, or with his lady deere" (465-66). It is clear, therefore, that Nature intends that all of the birds should aim at love's proper function; it is the noble birds, on the other hand, who insist on following Cupid's rules which will eventually lead them to the Temple of Venus. And the formel herself knows all about the eagles' intentions, as she implies when she answers the royal eagles by saying "I wol nat serve Venus ne Cupid" (652).

In placing the birds as Nature's subjects, and in identifying three of them as courtly lovers, the poet sets the whole world of Nature in relation to the select circle of amour courtois. This of course is evident not only in the debate itself, but is further emphasised in the dichotomy between the environment of Venus's Temple and the park of Nature. It is true that in the Temple we meet only passionate lovers and that in Nature's park the majority of birds have their hearts set on mating and procreating, but it is also obvious that the suitors have other ideas in mind: they consciously avoid using the terms applied by Nature herself; they behave like courtly lovers; and they use the artificial formulas of

such love. The royal tercel is himself described in the stock terms attributed to courtly lovers: "The wyse, and worthi, secre, trewe as stel" (395).

The royal tercel rests his chief claim to the formel's "grace" on the assertion that he loves her best of all and that he will serve her faithfully and forever no matter how she treats him (415-41); the second tercel "of lower kind" bases his contention on the fact that he too loves her best of all, "Or at the leste I love hire as wel as ye" (452), and, besides promising to be ever faithful, also boasts that he has served her much longer than the royal tercel (449-62); the third suitor, of inferior degree though nonetheless courtly, dismisses the duration of service as not important, emphasises the intensity of service as a better claim to her love, considers himself "hire trewest man" and also promises to love her all his life (464-83). Chaucer has a special reason for distinguishing the respective degrees of the eagles. The royal tercel's plea is in perfect agreement with his position as the most "worthi" courtly lover. The second suitor's wooing, courtly though it may be, affirms the poet's qualification that, in terms of courtly love, he is of "lower kind". The third eagle's plea is particularly significant. Since he is the lowest of the three lovers, hence the least courtly, it is natural for him to dismiss the important courtly principle of long service and to assert instead that intensity of service is of a superior value as an expression of love. It must be noted, that what according to the third eagle appears to be the most worthy contention in order to win the formel, almost bridges the gap between artificial courtly love and natural love.

All of a sudden the spotlight swerves from the intense courtly

rivalry to the bustle of the realities of everyday life expressed in the vulgar outbursts of the lower birds:

The noyse of foules for to ben delyvered
 So loude rong, "Have don, and lat us wende!"
 That wel wende I the wode hadde al toshyvered
 "Com of!" they criede, "allas, ye wol us shende!
 Whan shal youre cursede pletynge have an ende?
 How sholde a juge eyther parti leve
 For ye or nay, withouten any preve?"
 (491-97)

Nature, in accordance with her role of enforcing order and harmony, mediates, and peace is restored. She decides that all the birds present, through their respective spokesmen, should give an opinion on the formel's wisest choice. If the final choice is to be made on courtly "worthinesse", then the inevitable winner must be the royal tercel. On more than one occasion, Nature herself affirms that the most "worthi" courtly suitor is the royal tercel. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that Nature wants the formel to choose the royal tercel, or for that matter any of the other two courtly suitors, for a lover.

The first spokesman, the noble falcon, is evidently unable to decide on any of the suitors on the basis of their artificial pleas. He diplomatically shifts this responsibility to the formel herself. The practical, though unattractive goose, speaking for the waterfowls, moves away from the main issue of the demande d'amour and instead questions the values and nature of the kind of love expressed by the courtly birds: "But she wol love hym, lat hym love another!" (567). One of the important courtly love principles--as seen in the outbursts of the eagles--is the disinterested faithfulness of the lover. This idea is also supported by

the upper-class birds, the sparrowhawk and the tercelet. But the lower birds know that at least two of the disputants are beating the air. In fact, what they discuss is, what is to become of the two who inevitably must be refused? Should they remain ever faithful with the absolute certainty of no reward? Thus, in effect, what they criticise is the nature of courtly love itself, and there is no doubt that its limitations are clearly revealed by their practical advice. Their suggestions are based not on learned theories, but on their personal experience arising out of the natural necessities of ordinary life--the need of the sexes for each other. And they are no less serious for being presented in terms of comic and cynical comment. For, noble as the suitors may be, if the two rejected lovers were to accept the advice of the turtle-dove, "Though that his lady everemore be straunge,/Yit lat hym serve hire ever, til he be ded" (584-85), their love will never prove fruitful. In other words, to follow such advice would be against the principles of Nature herself and against her very presence on this special St. Valentine's Day. If they are to be genuinely obedient to the laws of Nature and to the kind of love she advocates, they must heed the sensible advice of the duck that "There been mo sterres, God wot, than a payre!" (595).

The debate serves to bring out the relative values of courtly and natural loves as they are sharply contrasted on the same stage. In the courtly diction and the lively cackle there is a constant contrast of styles which in turn reflects the contrast of the two kinds of love. The most effective ironic touch is revealed in the fact that what appears from the courtly point of view to be the noblest mark of distinction and merit, appears

to the goose, the duck, and the other common birds, as nothing more than folly and stupidity. Whether the mockers understand the courtly code or not is not really important; the truth is that they immediately recognize some of its limitations. For although these limitations are merely implicit, their effects are clearly manifest: courtly love aims at mere delight and not procreation, therefore the courtly birds--like Venus whom they serve--are distorting Nature's function in love.¹⁶ Furthermore, notwithstanding all the pains of service, courtly lovers are always at the mercy of their ladies and may therefore remain forever hopeless lovers, no doubt frustrated, and slowly approaching Venus's tragic wall.

The debate has not really solved anything, for as Nature herself says: "And in effect yit be we nevere the neer" (619); and Nature after restoring peace in her park reaffirms that the final choice rests with the formel. Nature reasserts the superlative courtly nobility of the royal eagle but she does not advise the formel to accept him as her lover. What she says is:

"If I were Resoun, certes, thanne wolde I
Conseyle yow the royal tercel take."
(632-33)

Since Nature is aware of the royal tercel's distortion of natural love, it becomes clear that she is being ironic every time she praises the "worth-
-nesse" of the royal eagle. Her final advice to the formel emphasises further the irony. In both parts of the Romance of the Rose and also in Chretien's Lancelot,¹⁷ Reason is never represented as being on the side of the courtly lover. Furthermore, Nature knows that Reason can never advise the formel to serve a deity notorious for unreasonableness.

The formel refuses to abandon Diana for Venus and Cupid. This decision is not altogether surprising. Like any ideal courtly lady, the formel is described as a paragon of beauty; however, the emphasis of her description rests on her moral and not her physical attributes: "In hire was everi vertu at his reste" (376). When she hears that the royal eagle desires her as a paramour and not as a "fere" she blushes--and she blushes not because she is meek and shy, she blushes because she is ashamed of what she has just heard: "Ryght so for shame al wexen gan the hewe/Of this formel, whan she herde al this" (444-45). On the basis of her moral virtues, she would have refused any lover whose intentions reflected a distortion of natural love. Her wish for a one year's respite does not necessarily imply that she would inevitably accept one of the courtly eagles, and she reaffirms her claim to decide what she likes, "And after that to have my choys al fre" (649). On the other hand, the artificial technicalities expressed by the eagles have also helped her to understand more fully the unnaturalness of courtly love. Her decision is not therefore that of a capricious courtly lady; neither does it imply that her only desire is to serve Nature. Maybe, like the later Emily, her sentiments are fully virginal. After all it takes all kinds to fill Nature's domain.

The outcome of the debate is a subtle affirmation of the relative values of the two kinds of love found coexisting in the earthly garden. There is no mistaking the frustration of the courtly lovers who have to wait another year in painful service without any guarantee of being accepted, and the delight of the common birds who express their gratitude to Nature in a joyful roundel. The poet himself, through the dreamer,

communicates his own delight at the ecstatic bliss that fills the hearts of the rewarded birds: "And, Lord, the blisse and joye that they make!" (669). The contrast of joy and disappointment at the end of the poem becomes even more meaningful if the contrast between Venus and her barren love (earlier depicted in the black inscription) and that of Nature and her generative love (seen in the inscription written in "vers of gold") is kept in mind. The pleasures awarded to those who follow Nature's "ryghtful ordenaunce", which is implanted by God's own design, are the elements left out of the dream of Scipio, found distorted to selfish ends in the temple of Venus, and also corrupted by the courtly birds in the way they strive for illicit embraces.

When, after having experienced the dream, the poet invokes Cytherea, it is certain that he does so not because he has dreamt of the Temple of Venus but rather because he has found gladness and health in the figure of Nature, echoed at the end of the poem in the blithe chorus of the birds. Although Chaucer's qualms are not completely dispelled, they are greatly diminished, and he can now look forward to books with hope. Indeed, Africanus's promise to requite him "sumdel of (his) labour" is fulfilled, for something at least he has learned about the value and nature of love: he now knows that happiness in love lies in learning and obeying Nature's rules, and that to ignore or corrupt them is to disdain Nature and invite frustration and disaster.

The poet of course does not derive any explicit moral from his poem since his intention is to treat his theme objectively. We have already seen how his disavowal of any experience in love helps him to achieve a non-

committal position. The bird motif itself also allows Chaucer to retain a detached attitude because it helps to isolate the complications of human love which, after all, is the theme of the poem. The poet's own point of view never intrudes although his approach arouses in the reader an implicit doubt concerning at least one kind of love that he exposes. But it is the reader and not the poet who draws the conclusion. It is in Troilus and Criseyde that he comes out into the open for the first time to condemn courtly love.

CHAPTER III

COURTLY LOVE AND CHRISTIAN LOVE

The chronological development of Chaucer's exploration into the significance of courtly love reaches its climax in Troilus and Criseyde. This ethic of love, especially its emphasis on illicit relationship, is condemned on both the social and the religious levels. Chaucer's rejection acquires a weightier significance when we consider that in this romance courtly love is favourably depicted and that the love relationship between Troilus and Criseyde, especially in the third book, reaches a most delicate balance. Nonetheless, no matter how attractive they may appear, the basic principles of courtly love rest on false foundations, and on account of this serious weakness, they must inevitably fail. This is what Chaucer reveals throughout the whole poem.

Chaucer's implicit message throughout the romance is clearly expressed in the Epilogue. The ending of Troilus and Criseyde does not seem to be the most logical starting point for an examination of the poem's theme, but it is certainly the best, since it avoids any possible ambiguity which the indirect treatment applied throughout may give rise to. The closing stanzas include two direct condemnations of the action that had preceded. In a scene which reminds us of the first part of The Parliament of Fowls where Scipio is guided to the "sterry place" by Africanus, Troilus's soul is taken up to the "eighthe spere" where he contrasts the vanity of the world with the felicity of heaven, laughs ironically at those

who sentimentalise his own life and death, and finally condemns the vain pursuit of transitory worldly pleasures (V, 1807-25). Whereas the contrast between heavenly and earthly values in The Parliament of Fowls merely implies the contrast between true and false felicity, Troilus's words are direct and cannot be misunderstood since they refer to his own past life. Chaucer makes Troilus's statements doubly effective when, at the end of the poem, the narrator bids the "yonge fresshe folk" to abandon earthly delights for the love of Christ, a love which is true and never leads to betrayal:

O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
 In which that love up groweth with youre age,
 Repeyareth hom fro worldly vanyte,
 And of youre herte up casteth the visage
 To thilke God that after his ymage
 Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
 This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.

And loveth hym, the which that right for love
 Up a crois, oure soules for to beye,
 First starf, and roos, and sit in hevne above;
 For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
 That wol he herte al holly on hym leye.
 And syn he best to love is, and most meke,
 What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?
 (V, 1835-48)

Some critics have strongly advocated that the Epilogue owes little to the main poem and that it is a mere palinode representing the role of the artist turned moralist.¹ This view, in effect, would imply that Chaucer did not know what he was talking about for over eight thousand lines--hardly the case! Although Chaucer is never a moral propagandist even if his Christian beliefs were highly orthodox, in this poem he presents his personal assessment (rather than a dogmatic injunction to the reader)

of the values of courtly love as they affect man in relation to his social and religious duties. And the condemnation is not merely restricted to the end of the poem; the Epilogue is firmly connected to the rest of the narrative, for in Troilus and Criseyde the poet does not present a romantic glorification of courtly love; on the contrary, the limitations of courtly love are implicitly condemned throughout the whole story of the two Trojan lovers.

In the code of love which Boccaccio accepts without much question in Il Filostrato, Chaucer sees inherent contradictions and fallacies which contribute strongly to the inevitable tragic end. The god of Love in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women is not making a casual remark when he brands Troilus and Criseyde a "heresy" against the "law" of courtly love (G. 256). To write such a heresy is Chaucer's intention, and he creates the desired impression about his theme by a number of varied and subtle structural devices that cannot be separated from the treatment of his subject-matter. The behaviour of the characters involved, not merely as individuals but also in relation with one another; the continuous contrast of secretive courtly love with the public world that surrounds the lovers, on the one side, and with the love of God, on the other; the ironic echoes of the Boethian philosophy throughout; and, finally, the role of the narrator--for the poem is not an objective representation but a tale with a comment; all these varied elements serve one purpose--to comment on the values of courtly love.

The chief personages are taken over from Il Filostrato, but

their characters have been profoundly altered in order to serve the new thematic purposes required of them in Troilus and Criseyde. The figure of Pandarus is not only the most interesting but, due to his peculiar position, also the natural starting point in examining the characters. Pandarus is Troilus's inseparable friend on the one hand, and Criseyde's uncle on the other. This double relation knits him closely with the action that proves futile and tragic. For, since Criseyde is to betray her love, Pandarus not only labours in vain, but, by the very success that his plans achieve, he contributes to the downfall of Troilus. This is one of the most meaningful ironies which the reader is made to bear in mind every time the busy Pandarus appears on the scene. And the meaning is further clarified when we realize to what extent his games and tricks are responsible for the serious consequences of the love he manipulates and encourages.

In the beginning of the romance, Pandarus sincerely believes that the love of Troilus and Criseyde is good in itself and will bring no harm to either lover. He is untiring in his labours to see the two united even when his plans involve his own honour--he has to lie to Criseyde on more than one occasion.² The idea of the intermediary between the lover and his lady was both recognized and accepted in courtly love affairs,³ hence it is not the role that is questionable, but the character who is responsible for acting it. Pandarus' grotesque behaviour is in itself a comment on what is supposed to be highly refined. This is exactly what Chaucer intends, for his main purpose is to question all that which was considered sacrosanct in this religion of love. Very often, it is not

what Pandarus says that is comic, but the garrulity and the over-solemnity whith which he says it. And at times, his antics cannot fail to remind the reader--even in this delicate romance--how dangerously close to a fabliau situation they bring certain scenes. Thus, for example, in the climactic third book where Troilus is finally united with Criseyde, Pandarus' over-enthusiastic mediations, his pushing Troilus into bed while at the same time tearing off the clothes of the lover (III, 1096-99), create an unwarranted comic effect that is not without a reminder of the "Reeve's Tale". The same idea of irreverence to the code is also given in Pandarus's words to Criseyde on the morning following the first embraces of the lovers:

Pandare, a-morwe which that comen was
 Unto his nece, and gan hire faire grete,
 Seyde: "Al this nyght so reyned it, allas,
 That al my drede is that ye, nece swete,
 Han litel leiser had to slepe and mete,
 Al nyght," quod he, "hath reyn so do me wake,
 That some of us, I trowe, hire hedes ake."
 (III, 1555-61)

His words and actions are a constant reminder that what was deemed by Troilus as a serious love relationship which embodied the source of all perfections, to Pandarus was nothing more than a game to be enjoyed and, as he shows, to be made fun of. He knows the rules of courtly love: in fact, he himself says that he has once shared in the game of love; but, unlike Troilus, he has never suffered in its service, for Pandarus is a man living outside its conditions and conscious of much that is beyond it. He is first and foremost a practical human being and he is therefore in

a position to laugh at everything and everybody including his own failures. Troilus is exactly the opposite--he is prepared to despair and die for love.

Pandarus' realistic approach is also evident in his realization that as a result of the limitations of the code the love between Troilus and Criseyde is doomed to fail. It is therefore natural to his character that he should offer anti-courtly advice to Troilus. Thus, for example, when Criseyde is forced to leave Troy, Pandarus suggests another mistress:

"And over al this, as thow wel woost thiselve,
This town is ful of ladys al aboute;
And, to my doom, fairer than swiche twelve
As evere she was, shal I fynde in som route,
Yee, on or two, withouten any doute.
Forthi be glad, myn owen deere brother!
If she be lost, we shal recovere an other."
(IV, 400-06)

It is not enough to say that Pandarus offers such advice for the well-being of his friend; the fact is that he knows it goes against the terms of his role and against the terms of courtly love and yet he insists on suggesting such an alternative. And a little later when he debates with Troilus on whether to abduct Criseyde or not, he proposes an even more irregular expedient:

. . . "Frend, syn thow hast swych distresse,
And syn thee list myn arguments to blame,
Why nylt thiselven helpen don redresse,
And with they manhod letten al this grame?
Go ravisshe here ne kanstow nat for shame!
And other lat here out of towne fare,
Or hold here stille, and leve thi nyce fare.

Artow in Troie, and hast non hardyment
To take a womman which that loveth the,
And wolde hireselven ben of thyn assent?
Now is nat this a nyce vanitee?
Ris up anon, and lat this wepyng be,
And kith thow art a man; for in this houre
I wol ben ded, or she shal bleven oure."
(IV, 526-39)

Pandarus knows that the suggestions he offers are anti-courtly, but we also learn from his words and actions that he is a practical man with the realist's point of view and that therefore he cannot fail to notice the limitations imposed by the code. His nature is adjusted not to the convictions of courtly love but to the practical needs of the situation.

Pandarus is also human enough to realize that his role is not at all praiseworthy. There is no escaping the seriousness of Pandarus in the censuring of his own undertaking: he is ashamed to say it, but he admits "in a sobre wyse" (III, 237), that what he has stooped to doing is something he will never do again for anybody:

" . . . I sey it for no bost,
 And wostow whi? for shame it is to seye:
 For the have I bigonne a gamen pleye,
 Which that I nevere do shal eft for other,
 Although he were a thousand fold my brother.
 That is to seye, for the am I bicomem,
 Bitwixen game and ernest, swich a meene
 As maken wommen unto men to comen."
 (III, 248-55)

Since after all it is in his own interest that Pandarus should act his part, Troilus insists on clearing his friend's name by making a distinction between friendship and hire (III, 393-420). But Pandarus, even as late as the last book, still feels remorse for playing a role which brought so much pain to the lovers:

"My brother deer, I may do the nomore.
 What sholde I seyen? I hate, ywys, Cryseyde!
 And, god woot, I wol hate hire evermore!
 And that thow me bisoughtest don of yoore,
 Havying unto myn honour ne my reste
 Right no reward, I dide al that the leste."
 (V, 1731-36)

It is obvious that this conflict in the mind of Pandarus, the go-between, reveals his serious doubts about his role. And since courtly love permitted, even encouraged, such a figure for the success and fulfilment of an amour, Pandarus' qualms by implication suggest the ethical deficiencies of this religion of love. This is one of the weaknesses of the code being pointed out by the poet throughout the romance.

And finally, Pandarus' significance becomes even more meaningful when this realistic character is compared to the idealistic Troilus. Troilus's love is never contemptible even if his engrossment makes him at times appear ridiculous. It is in particular Pandarus' matter-of-fact realism that exposes the lover's preposterous absorption in his own woes as though nothing else in the world mattered outside them. In fact, when Troilus becomes Fortune's fool nothing is really important any more except his love for Criseyde. In the early part of the poem we learn that Pandarus too had been a courtly lover, indeed a hopeless lover. But instead of despairing, he dismissed his failures with a jovial "I hoppe alwey behinde" (II, 1107); he pursued his service without betraying one "symptom". The youthful Troilus, on the other hand, becomes more serious and more morose; in the final scenes, his continued juxtaposition with Pandarus produces a balance between sympathy and comedy, with the bias on comedy. And the emergence of comedy in a tragic situation is in itself a form of comment. The love-sickness of Troilus becomes more and more striking--at times bordering on the absurd--by contrast with Pandarus' naturalness than it would have been by itself. Pandarus' conception of life is by no means

attractive, indeed it is highly coarse on occasion, but it nonetheless permits him to lead a near-normal life; on the other hand, Troilus's idealism, ennobled further by his love for Criseyde, forces him into self-pitying fantasies which not only fail to contribute to a happy life, but detach him completely from his personal and social duties and eventually lead to his death. In the implied contrast between courtly idealism and the business of everyday life, Chaucer contributes further to his intention of exposing the most serious of the code's weaknesses before issuing a final explicit condemnation.

Troilus is the only character who has not undergone much change in Chaucer's hands from his Italian original: he is still the brave warrior and the passionate lover. Chaucer has in fact idealized this lover even more, and in his abandonment to grief and despair, as well as in his complete absorption in his love, humility, and servility to his lady, Troilus is the perfect example of the courtly lover. The more faithfully Troilus follows the code, the more Chaucer implies its failings, since not even the most ideal follower is spared. Consequently, Chaucer seems to be asking why such a faithful servant should meet such a tragic end when he is supposed to be protected by an all-powerful deity.

In the beginning of the poem, Troilus is a scoffer both at lovers:

"I have herd told, pardieux, of youre lyvyng,
 Ye loveres, and youre lewed observaunces
 And which a labour folk han in wynnynge
 Of love, and in the kepyng which dountaunces;
 And whan youre preye is lost, woo and penaunce.
 O verray fooles! nyce and blynde be ye,"
 (I, 197-202)

and at the god of Love:

"Youre hire is quyt ayeyn, ye, God woot how!
 Nought wel for wel, but scorn for good servyse.
 In feith, youre ordre is ruled in good wise!"
 (I, 334-36)

These lines are full of ironic anticipation since we know that Troilus is about to be as blind as the lovers he has just sneered at. It is interesting to note that in Boccaccio, probably a result of the autobiographical parallels, Troilo's contempt is based on the fickle and heartless nature of women; in Chaucer, on the other hand, the scoffing is aimed at the hardships arising from the uncertainty and unorthodox observances of the religion of courtly love. This suggests that Chaucer's theme concerns the faults of courtly love itself and not a censure of some individual lover. The lovers are of course important in the sense that it is through their actions and behaviour that the severity and impracticality of the code are more clearly brought out.

Troilus is soon "converted" by the irresistible powers of the god, and as the story progresses he continues to adhere obstinately to the courtly rules until he no longer has any power over his own actions. Nonetheless, the reward he receives for his pains is brief and uncertain. It is also evident that as the theme develops we become aware that there are no happy lovers mentioned in the whole story: Oenone is abandoned by Paris, the love of Helen and Paris is the cause of endless strife and the eventual destruction of Troy, Pandarus' love has never been fruitful, and Criseyde will eventually betray Troilus.⁴ More and more we are made to realize how correct Troilus was in his first opinion regarding the nature of love and

lovers. The message that Chaucer wants the reader to grasp is implicit yet inescapable: the god of Love is not a fair master whom his servants can trust. And by deduction it follows that the principles of courtly love which the god represents are unsound if such is the lot of the lovers.

Troilus knows how capricious the god of Love can be, and yet he not only allows himself to become his servant but also to endure pain and even loss of reason. The hero's behaviour serves an ironic purpose because it enables us to judge the worthiness of the warrior before he meets Criseyde, and the kind of ennoblement that such a love has inspired in him. The effects caused by love in the first two books are multiplied and magnified when Troilus eventually finds himself alone and betrayed. Since the physical presence of the lovers was of essential importance to the success of a courtly relationship, Criseyde's absence not only torments the lover but is in itself a threat to the code, for the sight of the lady was considered the main source of ennoblement and inspiration to the lover's humble service.⁵ Chaucer has made sure to exaggerate, even by the normal courtly love standards, the effects which Criseyde's absence and final betrayal has had on Troilus. In fact, in certain scenes, this "worthy" lover is possibly reduced even to the state of caricature. For example, Troilus's description of his excessive wallowing in bed, where he finds comfort only in the embrace of a pillow, puts the hero in a ridiculous light (V, 218-224); and again, even before the stipulated ten days of Criseyde's return are over, Troilus decides to die and calls upon Pandarus to complete the necessary preparations for his funeral, making the scene become, to say the least,

bathetic (V, 295-322). And the effect is doubly ironic since we know that Criseyde is just about to prove false in spite of all these antics. Furthermore, Troilus's invocations in front of Criseyde's empty house, the temple without the blessed saint, he calls it (the saint who betrays her religion) is another instance of Troilus's curious helplessness (V, 540-53). This sad comedy reaches its climax at the gate where the procrastinated wait for Criseyde provides only too convincingly an instance of man's loss of reason when, where the wish is strong enough for deluding itself, a "fare-cart" turns into an image of a beautiful woman (V, 1156-62). The irony drives deeper and deeper, and the message becomes extremely lucid: what kind of love is this that under its compulsion the noblest of men is deprived of reason?

It remains to study Criseyde's contribution to the theme that Chaucer is exploring. The heroine plays a vital role in the story, for it is her actions which hasten the tragic end. In her behaviour towards Troilus, Criseyde is to a large extent a courtly lady even if at times she reveals a certain amount of rebellious nature, as for example, when she shows little patience with the courtly duty of lovers to be jealous (III, 1029).⁶ Her occasional non-conformity shows that Criseyde is not merely another stock courtly lady: she knows the rules and duties of one, yet at the same time, she remains an individual character with personal likes and dislikes. However, with the more important tenets of the code she is in complete agreement. Like any courtly lady she is also strikingly beautiful, since it is her beauty that has to inspire the love of her admirer.

Scattered throughout the romance may be found epithets of the highest decorative value: immediately after the first mention of Criseyde, Chaucer adds, "in beauty first so stood she, makeless" (I, 172). She has a spotless reputation, her manners are gay yet gentle; she is friendly, of a noble heart, wise, and a "lady vertuous is al" (I, 898). Chaucer also inserts two formal descriptions of the heroine's beauty, one on her physical beauty (III, 1247-50), the other on her moral worth (V, 820-25). Her position is also greatly superior to that of Troilus since she is the one who inspires love. Therefore it is her prerogative to behave like a cruel mistress and prove difficult to win. In the romance, this courtly idea is evident on many occasions. The best description of the lover's attitude and the clearest assertion of the superiority of the lady are found in the words of Troilus during his interview with Criseyde at the house of Deiphebus:

"And I to ben youre verray, humble, trewe
Secret, and in my paynes pacient,
And evere mo desiren fresshly newe
To serve, and ben ay ylike diligent
And with good herte al holly youre talent
Receyven wel, how sore that me smerte."
(III, 141-46)

True to her role, Criseyde is also amorous, yet not sensuous. In fact, Chaucer takes pains to enhance the courtly elements in the lady's nature; thus he minimizes the sheer physical passion which he found in the Italian heroine. Where in Il Filostrato, Troilo's suggestion to elope is turned down by Crisseida because she argues that the charm and very existence of their love arises from its very intermittency and from its furtiveness,⁷ the English heroine refuses to elope for a different reason, which is none-

theless legitimately courtly though much less erotic than Crisseida's: originally, she had accepted her uncle's wishes to take Troilus as her lover provided great precaution was taken to keep the affair secret (III, 204); now she rejects Troilus's suggestion in order to safeguard her reputation. Chaucer has continuously applied all his artistic abilities to create a favourable image of both the courtly doctrine and of Criseyde. Why then, does Criseyde betray her lover and her religion? The answer is partially to be found in that side of her character which is predominantly human.

Chaucer had endeavoured to mould Criseyde into a human courtly lady, or at least what his genius contrives to make us accept as a living person. Above all she is charming, frail, and perhaps most important of all "the ferfulleste wight that mighte be" (II, 450). These characteristics will eventually contribute significantly to her fall, for such a nature will prove fatally weak against the situations and conditions demanded of her by the rules of amour courtois. Even among the relative security of her friends in Troy she is constantly fearful, unsure, bashful, tearful; without her uncle it would have been impossible for her to manipulate the intricacies of courtly love. This is why, when left alone in a strange and friendless place she decides to take the easy way out. And since Chaucer knows that a woman like Criseyde is liable to prove faithless to Troilus and to the whole code, he records her courtly sin with all charitableness. Nonetheless, her love for Troilus is sincere, and there is no doubt that she would have remained ever faithful and contented under a normal relationship. But this is exactly what Chaucer is getting at in

his exploration of the courtly conditions--there can be no such a thing as a normal life between lovers as long as their love is ruled by principles that ignore both man's duty to himself and to the accepted traditions of the society around him. On the other hand, Criseyde must prove unfaithful, when the above considerations are taken into account, for her fall is the most important contribution to the theme that Chaucer is exploring. But her act must not be overstressed, for Chaucer is not as much interested in one special woman as in the code that forces its unnatural conditions on any man or woman.

Criseyde's human character must also be examined in the light of the conditions in which she lived. Her father had proven a traitor to Troy, and thus her position in the city became more precarious. It is to be expected, therefore, that a woman of Criseyde's disposition and in her predicament should consider any male advances very carefully before reaching any definite decision. She must not be labelled "calculating" for taking her time to decide whether to accept Troilus or not, even if some of her arguments are basically selfish (II, 659-812). Indeed, they can be nothing else, for this is consistent with her character--her frail, lonely, and fearful heart--and also with the woman's position in a courtly situation. Her fearfulness is not only a defence against any ulterior motives which a lover may have in mind, but it is also the natural fearfulness of a defenceless woman living in a city besieged for many years by the Greek army. In fact, her fear is a part of her nature: she is afraid of losing her liberty if she accepts a lover; she is afraid of the stormy

life of lovers; she is afraid of wicked tongues; she is afraid of lovers' treason (the reader who knows which of the two lovers will prove false cannot fail to notice the ironic touch in her last cause of fear). Her rationalizations are frank and although they reveal no innocent maiden, neither do they reveal an opportunist. Such she is at the beginning and such she remains at the end--rational, yet fearful. This is why her monologue on whether to accept Troilus or not prepares us for her later submission to Diomedes, since it is based on the same considerations--fear and practical rationalization.

A woman like Criseyde, in a strange place and friendless, cannot possibly be expected to withstand Diomedes's advances for very long. She has learned also that Troy is inevitably doomed. Her practical mind decides that it is useless to sacrifice herself in the destruction of the city; her fear, which is closely linked to her tender-heartedness, finally causes her to accept Diomedes. Thus, while her infidelity can never be commended on the courtly level, it can be explained and condoned on the human and realistic plane. The dichotomy between courtly idealism and practical humanity is further developed until it reaches a climax in Criseyde's repudiation of her love, an action in effect necessitated by those very ideals that prove impossible to fulfil in life. This does not mean that Criseyde did not try very hard to achieve a normal courtly relationship; she is sincere in what she says and does, even if by other standards her actions are considered insufficient. Thus, her intention of being ever faithful to Diomedes is as genuine as had been her intention of being forever true

to Troilus, and as her sorrow was genuine when she was forced to leave Troy. But she is too real to survive in the tight and demanding rules of this ethic of love, and her errors are basically human errors. This is why Chaucer frequently insists that his reader must not be too strict in condemning Criseyde, for Chaucer is never unsympathetic to human folly. She is indeed depicted as a pitiable creature whom we can look upon with compassion; and once we understand her character and the limitations of the code she is made to follow, her fall becomes less damning.

Besides the obvious limitations of the ethic of courtly love as revealed by the individual characters of the three personae, Chaucer applies other structural devices to reinforce his intention of pointing out the weakness of the code. One such expedient is his use of contrasts, which has already proved effective in the Parliament of Fowls. In this romance, courtly love is continually contrasted, and therefore also implicitly judged, against two higher values--those of society and of Christianity. When tested, it fails on both counts.

Because Troilus accepts the teachings of amour courtois with blind devotion, he fails not only in his personal but also in his public duties. Troilus subjects himself to a love which will have nothing to do with Reason.⁸ As soon as he is captivated, his one aim is to pursue his passionate desires at any cost, even at the expense of resigning his royal position. In rejecting his public duties, he is in effect rejecting the natural hierarchical degree assigned to him. His position in Troy is that of a prince, and his public duties are not slight considering the vulner-

able situation Troy happens to be in at the time. But courtly love has severed the harmony between the social station of Troilus and the responsibility which such a station carries. Troilus fights the enemy not to fulfil his public obligation, but as a result of the effects of love on him: when he falls in love he fights to show his prowess; when Criseyde betrays him, he fights to kill Diomedes who has supplanted him in Criseyde's heart. The society, of course, does not know what is happening inside the lover's mind, but again, this is an added weakness of the code, for man in following it, has to live divorced from the society around him.

And in order that courtly love may survive it has to hide in an unnatural world of its own, a world full of restrictions and hardships. This explains why the courtly code puts extra emphasis on the element of secrecy. To portray the hardships a lover must endure in this kind of secretive service, Chaucer includes one of his most elaborate scenes for this specific purpose--the arranged meeting of Troilus and Criseyde at the house of Deiphebus.⁹ All the detailed underhanded dealings of Pandarus and the combination of secrecy with illness unite to expose the introverted nature of courtly love, which, according to Troilus is so worthy and so ennobling. There can be no doubt that Chaucer's purpose is to reveal the impracticality of courtly love and, by implication, to suggest the sanity of ordinary natural life.

The lover who has to hide from his fellow men can find no possible consolation for his woes; he has to suffer all by himself. The scene where the women of Troy bewail Criseyde's fate is most appropriate in this context,

and it is also full of ironic comment on the love that she practices (IV, 687-728). The point of irony, at times also of pity, is in the clash between the public social life and the secret love life of Criseyde. When Criseyde has to leave Troy, the women come to sympathise or to rejoice with her according to whichever they may feel to be more tactful. However they fail to comprehend the source of her sorrow because they do not know what is going on in Criseyde's mind; they sympathise, but not because Criseyde has to leave Troilus. Then our attention is focused on her heart, where the ladies' social tact and inappropriate sympathy are without relevance. The climax is reached when Criseyde, unable to endure the irony any longer, bursts into tears and they can only suppose that she weeps because she must depart from themselves and from Troy. They weep too, but once again for the wrong reasons. With all their good intentions, they can offer Criseyde no consolation. And the fault lies exclusively with the asocial aspects of courtly love.

This particular weakness of the code is also evident in Troilus's behaviour in the last book. Criseyde is in the Greek camp, and Troilus, broken-hearted, waits in vain. No one can possibly offer him any consolation, for he dares not ease his heart by inquiring about his beloved. He is even isolated from those very close to him, his own family::

Priam ful ofte, and ek his moder deere,
 His bretheren and his sustren gonne hym freyne,
 Whi he so sorwful was in al his cheere,
 And what thyng was the cause of al his peyne.
 But al for naught; he nolde his cause pleyne.
 (V, 1226-30)

Courtly love, indeed, imposes cruel conditions on those who partake of it. And this is the whole point Chaucer is proving: such a love is limited by its own strict conditions and it must fail when it insists on isolating itself from the normal life of an ordered society, for no special provisions can be included to safeguard a cult which is asocial by its very nature.

One of Chaucer's aims in this poem, as seen above, is to test courtly love by human standards--the characters in particular and the society in general--and to show that it is wanting. But the poet also has more serious intentions. He judges the values of courtly love against man's spiritual duties, and it is especially on this level that the code fails utterly and has finally to be condemned explicitly. Throughout the poem, two special structural devices keep the reader aware that the theme transcends an interpretation which is fixed merely by physical standards: the pervasive Christian imagery on the one side, and the frequent echoes of Boethian philosophy on the other. These are constant reminders of man's ultimate purpose in life and of his helplessness when faced by forces which require unstinted efforts to be checked.

With complete deliberation, Chaucer places the courtly action in the perspective of Christianity. As early as the troubadour poets, many terms used in the treatment of courtly love were borrowed from the real Church.¹⁰ The blending of religious and courtly characteristics resulted in an analogy between Christianity and courtly love considered as religions. At this early stage, the purpose of ecclesiastical terms in courtly love poetry was merely^{to serve as} a means of parodying the real religion. Chaucer's use

of Christian terms in Troilus and Criseyde, however, goes beyond mere parody; here this intermingling becomes a part of Chaucer's exploration of the values of courtly love contrasted to the values of Christian love. In the first book, every detail of Troilus's longing to possess Criseyde physically has overtones of a religious devotee praying for eternal union with God:

"God wolde I were aryved in the port
Of deth, to which my sorwe wol me lede!
A, lord, to me it were a gret comfort;
Than were I quyt of languisshyng in drede."
(I, 526-29)

Like a penitent sinner he is converted to the new religion who, with words that remind us of Christ on the cross, cries, "O lord, now youres is/My spirit" (I, 422-3). In the instruction of Pandarus to Troilus on how to serve the god of Love, there is the most elaborate use of ecclesiastical and liturgical imagery:

"Or hastow som remors of conscience,
And art now falle in som devocioun,
And wailest for thi synne and thin offence,
And hast for ferde caught attricioun?"
(I, 554-57)

In the second book, Antigone's song (II, 827-75) expresses the idea of Christian grace. The analogy to the real God is present in her sentiment that the god of Love has bestowed upon her a special grace in inclining her heart to love and so ordering her life:

"Whom shulde I thanken but yow, god of Love,
Of al this blisse, in which to bathe I gynne?
And thanked by ye, lord, for that I love!
This is the righte life that I am inne,

To flemen alle manere vice and synne:
 This dooth me so to vertu for t'entende,
 That day by day I in my wille amende."
 (II, 848-54)

At the house of Deiphebus, where his plans reach a first culmination, Pandarus falls on his knees and praises God because he has just experienced a "miracle":

"Immortal god," quod he, "that mayst nat dyen,
 Cupide I mene, of this mayst glorifie;
 And Venus, thow mayst maken melodie;
 Withouten hond, me semeth that in towne
 For this miracle, ich here ech belle sowne."
 (III, 185-89)

The words "Cupide I mene" have a special significance since their apparently harmless inclusion in a passage full of Christian connotations clearly show that the figure of god is ambiguous and therefore to be understood in either context throughout the tale. What is even more interesting about Pandarus' words is the emphasis on Venus and her reference to harmony, for we know that the love about to be consummated will bring discord and tragedy, not harmony. The implied irony is further strengthened in the third book which contains the climax of the love story and in which the bond of love is given added prominence.

In the Prologue (III, 1-49) Venus is introduced as the symbol of unifying love, both cosmic and sexual; but it is obvious that the figure which advocates and patronizes illicit love can only be the one who presided over the temple in the Parliament of Fowls, concupiscent Venus. The Boethian influence, which is particularly evident when Troilus

and Criseyde are in bed together adds to the irony. In De Consolatione Philosophiae Boethius speaks about the bond of love which rescues the universe from confusion and which also knits together individual lives through the sacrament of marriage.¹¹ Chaucer introduces two passages in the third book about love's harmonizing power and both are strongly Boethian in content. In the first, the bond of love is expressed by Troilus when he is still in bed with Criseyde:

"Benigne Love, thow holy bond of thynges,
Whoso wol grace, and list the nought honouren,
Lo, his desir wol fle withouten wynges.
For noldestow of bownte hem socouren
That serven best and most alwey labouren,
Yet were al lost, that dar I wel seyn certes,
But if thi grace passed oure desertes.

And for thow me, that leest koude disserve
Of hem that noumbred ben unto thi grace,
Hast holpen, ther I likly was to sterve,
And me bistowed in so heigh a place
That thilke boundes may no blisse pace,
I kan namore; but laude and reverence
Be to they bounte and thy excellence!"
(III, 1261-74)

This same sentiment is also expressed by Troilus after the first union (III, 1744-71). The Boethian praise is aimed at the divine bond of love which, on one level, unites people together in marriage and chaste love. The lovers in this poem apply the bond of harmony to a love which is patently illicit. The bond in itself is not degraded, but it is surely abused, for their love is not as God intended. This is what Chaucer implies and what he later concretely shows when the bond between Troilus and Criseyde is disrupted and their love ends in tragedy.

Echoes of divine love in the third book are also evident in the behaviour of the two lovers. The physical union of Troilus and Criseyde is continuously set against a background of Christian theology; both Troilus and Criseyde describe their joys and give thanks to Love in religious terms; in Troilus' prayer to Venus when he is about to go to Criseyde's bed, there is present the idea of the Blessed Virgin's intercession to God on behalf of those who implore her:

"Yet, blisful Venus, this nyght thow me enspire,"
 Quod Troilus, "As wys as I the serve,
 And evere bet and bet shal, til I sterve.

.
 Thy fader prey al thilke harm disturne
 Of grace, and that I glad ayein may turne,
 For love of him thow lovedest in the shawe,
 I meene Adoun that with the boor was slawe."
 (III, 712-21)

Apart from the implicit contrast of courtly and heavenly love, certain direct statements by the characters themselves also show that earthly love is of a much inferior value than Christian love. When Pandarus approaches Criseyde with the intention of making her partake in Love's observances, she replies, "It sate me wel bet ay in a cave/To bidde,
 and rede on holy seyntes lyves" (II, 117-18)¹²; later, the heroine finds the happiness of the world false and mixed with bitterness:

"O god!" quod she, "so worldly selynesse,
 Which clerkes callen false felicitee,
 Imedled is with many a bitternesse!"
 (III, 813-15)

Pandarus warns Troilus that worldly joys hold only for a short time: "For

worldly joie halt nat but by a wir./That preveth wel, it brest alday so ofte" (III, 1636-37). Troilus is the only one who accepts courtly love as the means of attaining perfect bliss; it is only when he dies that he beholds its vanities.

The two levels--the religion of courtly love and the religion of the Church--each orthodox in its place and each incompatible with respect to the other, are in this poem continually blended until the Epilogue. The main thematic function of the religious imagery in Troilus and Criseyde is that it suggests all along the values inverted by the hero in particular, and by courtly love in general. It specifically serves to draw the reader's attention to the corruption taking place in Troilus's reason, as his idolatry submits him completely to the pursuit of an earthly paradise. And this is the primary cause for his tragic fall. Earthly endeavours, however noble they may appear, have to be abandoned in order that heavenly bliss may be attained. This was the predominant medieval view of earth and heaven--the contemptu mundi--already seen in the dream of Scipio in the Parliament of Fowls, and once more explicitly stated in The Epilogue of Troilus and Criseyde. Troilus fails because he becomes blinded by the wrong choice. His tragedy does not result from having trusted in a woman, but because he places in this woman and in the courtly code the one hope for his happiness; but, from a Christian point of view, Criseyde's love represents at best a temporary and an imperfect ideal.

The theme of the poem is developed further by means of a number

of philosophical reflections included in the poem. Most of what Chaucer knew about man's actions and of the conditions which govern man's behaviour, he had learned in his translation of Boethius' De Consolatione Philosophiae. Above all, Chaucer realized more and more that life on earth is a constant flux wherein man's happy state may be changed overnight by the same forces that made it happy. And Fortune, whose function is to rule over the careers of human beings, is responsible to a large extent for man's undoing.¹³ This is why, in the medieval definition of tragedy, Fortune is given a major part:

Tragedies noon oother maner thyng
 Ne kan in syngyng crie no biwaille
 But that Fortune alwey wole assaile
 With unwar strook the regnes that been proude;
 For whan men trusteth hire, thanne wol she faille,
 And covere hire brighte face with a clowde.
 (VII, 2761-66)

Chaucer calls Troil^us and Criseyde a "tragedye" because it fulfills these requirements and, in fact, goes still further.

There can be no doubt that Fortune plays a very important role not only in the lives of the lovers, but also in the world around them. Troilus immediately blames her for his misfortune of being chosen for Love's service: "For wel fynde I that Fortune is my fo" (I, 837). But, as the story progresses, since he finds love quite pleasant, Troilus gives himself up completely to her power. He believes that his homage to her is adequate to free him from the wheel. This is why in the fourth book, when the reversal of Fortune takes place, he is immediately thrown into panic.

He can do nothing about his position because he neither understands the workings of Fortune, nor does he try to resist her.. And this is where he especially proves his weakness as a rational human being. Pandarus defends Fortune by telling Troilus that it is the nature of the goddess to alternate her favours, but nowhere does he point out that Fortune can also be resisted if man's will is strong enough.¹⁴ This, of course, is in full conformity with Pandarus' character, which at times appears to function as Fortune's aide. Thus, for example, although Troilus's meeting with Criseyde in the Palladium must be attributed solely to chance, it is Pandarus who manipulates all the arrangements for the consummation of the love initiated by Fortune in the temple. On the other hand, as long as Fortune is willing to permit a smooth relationship between the two lovers, she will help Pandarus in his task. For example, Pandarus' plan to get the lovers together for the first time is greatly simplified with the downpour of "that smoky reyn" (III, 628). And Pandarus' task is made easier still when we consider that by sheer chance he happens to be Troilus's very good friend and at the same time Criseyde's uncle. But good Fortune is not a guarantee against bad Fortune, and when events start to take a turn for the worse, neither Pandarus, nor Troilus, nor Criseyde can do anything to avert the impending disintegration of the love relationship, since they have all become subservient to Fortune's will.

In the first two books, both Troilus and Criseyde demonstrate their ability to make a decision; they choose what they consider desirable, thereby determining their lot. It is the kind of love that they both

accept which restrains their free will. Boethius explains that Fortune is not a danger to the strong-willed, but only to those who subject themselves to it by setting their hearts on a mutable rather than an immutable good.¹⁵ This is exactly what the two lovers do, and this is why Fortune proves too strong for both of them. If Fortune was all-powerful, then the narrator's appeal to the young folk in the Epilogue would be meaningless. Since his reason and will have been completely subdued, Troilus is convinced that he is helpless against Fortune. The trouble with Troilus is not that he lacks free-will, but that the religion of love he follows leaves him no room to exercise it. This is another limitation of the courtly ideal which Chaucer exposes, since it runs against the nature of man as a rational being. Such an irrational man is Troilus in his fatalistic argument on the subject of providence and free-will. He arrives precisely at the conclusion that suits his mental blindness: "Of thynges that ben wist bifore the tyde,/They mowe not ben eschued on no wyde" (IV, 1077-78). The long soliloquy (IV, 955-1085) is deliberately taken out of Boethius' address to Lady Philosophy, but with one vital omission--the reconciliation of free-will with God's foreknowledge.¹⁶ The irony for those who knew De Consolatione Philosophiae was self-evident. The fact is, that Troilus's conclusion is the only one he could possibly arrive at, for he is a slave to Fortune because he is a pawn to the god of Love.

Apart from the continuous harrassment of Fortune, there is also included in the poem an aura of doom over the whole of Troy. W.C. Curry expresses this feeling very succinctly when he describes the tragedy as being "strongly deterministic in tone, the action of which is presided

over by a complex and inescapable destiny that bears strongly on the chief characters and over the city of Troy".¹⁷ One is made to feel that the days of Troy are numbered and that the fate hovering over Troilus and Criseyde will presently engulf them in general disaster. This impression is also a part of the theme, for the poet's artistic finesse enables us to identify the inevitable tragedy of Troilus's love with the dangerous and fatal division represented by the siege of Troy. W.C. Curry points out this analogy in very convincing terms:

Through the first three books we are likely to forget the ominous warnings concerning the city's coming destruction, seeing that Troilus and Criseyde are apparently the darlings of Fortune and feeling that destiny itself subscribes to them; the tragic qualm which we experienced at the beginning of the story has been allayed to some extent by the growing sense that cosmic forces are arrayed on the lovers' side. But now the old gray Calchas, who fled from Troy long ago because he knew it must fall, begins his croakings again. He demands of the Greeks that his daughter, Criseyde, be exchanged among other prisoners of war in order that she may escape the general holocaust. . . . The ancient enmity of the incensed gods still hangs over the city, and we hear closer and more pronounced rumblings, as it were, of the Fate which is soon to be unloosed upon it. How shall Troilus survive when he is caught in the maelstrom of such colossal forces?¹⁸

Troilus, of course, will not survive, for he is a diehard follower of a religion which is as doomed to fail as Troy is doomed to disappear.

The foregoing discussion has attempted to point out that the ideal of courtly love proves highly inadequate and impractical when judged against both natural and spiritual values. When the flesh with its cumbersome desires has been left behind in death, Troilus understands his past follies, and he laughs at those who weep for his death. In the whole course of the poem, Troilus has not laughed once when he was in love. But this is a very special kind of laughter, for it is ironic--it is the kind of laughter

The first part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
theoretical aspects of the problem. It is shown that the
problem is well-posed in the sense of Hadamard. The
existence and uniqueness of the solution is proved.
The second part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
numerical aspects of the problem. It is shown that the
problem can be solved by the method of finite differences.
The results of the numerical calculations are presented.

The third part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
physical aspects of the problem. It is shown that the
problem is well-posed in the sense of Hadamard. The
existence and uniqueness of the solution is proved.
The fourth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
mathematical aspects of the problem. It is shown that the
problem can be solved by the method of finite differences.
The results of the numerical calculations are presented.

The fifth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
conclusions of the paper. It is shown that the
problem is well-posed in the sense of Hadamard. The
existence and uniqueness of the solution is proved.
The sixth part of the paper is devoted to a discussion of the
conclusions of the paper. It is shown that the
problem is well-posed in the sense of Hadamard. The
existence and uniqueness of the solution is proved.

that both Chaucer and Troilus would bestow on all those who take a serious attitude towards the love just described in the romance.

It is not very often that Chaucer--whether as poet, narrator, or persona--comes out of his usual objective stance to air his personal views.¹⁹ Such a rare instance occurs in Troilus and Criseyde, but for a special reason. In the Epilogue he declares that earthly joy lasts too briefly, and that young men and women should therefore cast their hearts on the love that is eternal (V, 1835-48). This direct statement by the narrator grows out of the part he has been playing in the whole poem. It is true that he is primarily a witness, but he takes time to explain, reflect, and comment--very often by the tone of his narration--on his characters' thoughts and feelings and also upon the nature of the love they practice. The narrator's comments are frequently ironic, and always significant. One common device he uses is to add some apparently harmless remark in an otherwise conventional description which all of a sudden generates a new connotation, often contrary to the original meaning. Thus, for example, the narrator's conventional and protracted description of the newly initiated courtly lover (I, 400-90) is viewed on a realistic basis and rendered somewhat ridiculous, especially since we know that his suffering is all in vain, with the inclusion of the "innocent" aside:

But how it was, certeyn, I kan nat seye,
If that his lady understood nat this,
Or feynede hire she nyste, oon of the tweye.
(I, 492-94)

The narrator also insists that there is a great deal in the code of courtly love which is out of harmony with man's real duties on earth. This explains why he half-smilingly shifts the responsibility to "myn auctour of his

excellence" every time a highly questionable side of courtly love is described, as in Book III. It is clear that he is thinking not so much of past and present, as of the contrast between conventional behaviour and the unorthodox conventions of amour courtois. Consequently, the narrator's final words should not surprise the reader, for they are merely the direct statement of the ideas implied throughout which give full meaning to the tragedy of Troilus.

C.S. Lewis surprisingly enough finds little which is amiss in the tragic romance. It is true that Chaucer endeavours to create a favourable and delicate impression of the love relationship, but he does this, not as Lewis maintains, to produce "a great poem in praise of love",²⁰ but to show that even the most touching and apparently harmless of courtly love relationships must inevitably fail. Strong exception must also be taken to the following words:

The loves of Troilus and Criseyde are so nobly conceived that they are divided only by the thinnest partition from the lawful loves of Dorigen and her husband. It seems almost an accident that the third book celebrates adultery instead of marriage.²¹

That "thinnest partition" is the most significant of all, for had Chaucer celebrated marital instead of illicit courtly love, there would have been no need for Pandarus' underhanded manipulations, no need for Criseyde's fear, pains, and final betrayal, no need for the woes and eventual tragedy of Troilus, and no need for the implicit and explicit condemnation of courtly love. But Chaucer's specific purpose is to expose the limitations of that love which not only fails but also ends in disaster; this is why we should not be surprised to find in Book III that the lovers indulge in an illicit love. Although Chaucer condemned courtly love in the special context of

extra-marital relationship, he did not desist from further examination of the convention's possibilities. In some of his later works, he returned to this form of love but modified its precepts in such a way that under certain conditions it could exist as a part of marital love.

CHAPTER IV

COURTLY LOVE AND MARITAL LOVE

After Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer's treatment of courtly love undergoes one fundamental modification: illicit love, whether implicitly referred to or directly described, is replaced by love either aimed at marriage or else already within wedlock. This new modification will be examined as it is developed in "The Knight's Tale", "The Wife of Bath's Tale", and "The Franklin's Tale".

The first definite attempt at achieving a modus vivendi between courtly behaviour and conjugal love occurs in "The Knight's Tale". It must not be concluded, however, that Chaucer was the originator of an attitude hitherto alien to English Literature. The idea that marital love was possible between courtly lovers is present in many Romances before his day. D. Van de Voort, in his study of love and marriage in the English cyclical romances of Arthur and Charlemagne, while he admits that many follow the courtly canon, also affirms that there is scarcely a romance concerned with extra-marital love that does not include either an outright condemnation of the illicit or adulterous passion or a realization of guilt in the mind of the lovers.¹ John Wilcox, after examining a number of English composite romances and their relation to courtly love, points out that the Englishmen who wrote these works usually rejected the courtly love treatment of their French sources:

Romantic love leading to marriage, and chaste love awaiting the formal marriage rite are the perennial English substitutes for doctrinaire free love. Instead of despairing of happiness in legal marriage as the French romances did, the English assumed that they lived happy ever after, if the union came from a strong pre-marital attraction.²

The story told by the Knight belongs to the period prior to the writing of the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women. In referring to a poem he had already written about "the love of Palamon and Arcite" (G, 408), Chaucer shows that he had made a version of Boccaccio's Il Tesseide before beginning the Canterbury Tales. From certain historical and astrological references, the dating of the original poem has been fixed in the 1380's.³ The precise relationship of this comparatively early work to the extant tale is not known. Nonetheless, although concrete evidence is lacking, it is safe to assume that a certain amount of revision was necessary to fit the story not only to the Knight but also to the structure of the Canterbury Tales. For this reason, I shall regard "The Knight's Tale" as having followed the writing of Troilus and Criseyde. In this way, the transitional development of the theme under study achieves a more coherent and more logical pattern.

It would be highly inaccurate to conclude that since marriage is now included as a part of the poem, Chaucer abruptly cuts off all reminders of his previous courtly theme. Courtly love is once more the subject of further examination and questioning, and many of the structural devices governing courtly love poetry are again present in this poem. The actions surrounding the love of Emelye are firmly set in the already familiar tradition: the beautiful May setting is the environment in which the lady's charm wounds the hearts of the two lovers (I, 1033-55); Emelye

is endowed with all the ideal physical and moral attributes which inspire and receive the humble service of lovers (I, 1035-55); the two sworn brothers behave in the typical courtly fashion, although the effects of love seem to be more emphasised in Arcite (I, 1219-74; II, 1355-79). The behaviour of the lovers must be explained from their respective claims to Emelye's love. Both love her intensely, but in a different way. Palamon's first reaction when he sees Emelye is as if he has beheld a goddess, and, from the very beginning, his love for her appears to be a transcendental experience. Arcite, on the other hand, at once regard the lady as a beautiful woman to be possessed without delay, and this attitude becomes more evident in the emphasised physical pains which he suffers throughout. One of the most subtle and most meaningful ironies in this poem is the eventual solution to this love dilemma, for, while Palamon will eventually win physical possession of Emelye, the temperamental Arcite will forever serve her in a spiritual union:

"Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
 Declare o point of alle my sorwes smerte
 To yow, my lady, that I love moost;
 But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
 To yow aboven every creature,
 Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure."
 (I, 2765-70)

The Tale does not immediately accept a positive view of life just because love is now directed towards its proper end, for love will always remain a strong force, and man will always remain constantly subject to conditions that may prove too strong for him to honour or resist if he is sufficiently blinded by an excess of anger or desire resulting from the power of love. The result is often tragic to man himself and menacing

to the society around him. "The Knight's Tale" explores this very point: the continuous peril facing the particular harmony of individual lives and the general order governing society, when the bond of love is either disrupted or abused.⁴ The threat of uncontrolled love on all forms of order is the focal point of this work.

The opening description of the conquest of the Amazons, the marriage to Ypolita, and the avenging of Creon's misdeeds (I, 859-1000), immediately widens our notion of Theseus as variously the wise ruler, the conqueror, the man of pity, and, most important of all, the enforcer of law and order. His marriage to Ypolita is especially significant since it symbolically represents the peace and harmony that ought to exist between the sexes; on a smaller scale, it also represents an ideal relationship between man and wife based on mutual and faithful love. This marriage is also indicative of Theseus' ability to unite in his person successes in war and love alike; for neither of the two knights will such a double triumph be possible--Arcite is to have victory in battle, Palamon will lose the battle but eventually succeed in love.

The first sign of disorder caused by the power of love becomes evident in the quarrel between the knights within the prison walls. The reaction of Arcite when he sees Emelye immediately leads to a passionate dispute between the two sworn brothers. Arcite becomes especially irate and quickly renounces the oath that had made sworn brothers of blood cousins. This was indeed a serious breach, for such a pledge was one of the most solemn and enduring expressions of chivalric comradeship.⁵ Arcite's rashness and lack of self-control seem to be further criticised

by contrast with Theseus' ability to unite in his figure the two values of enduring friendship and harmonizing love as seen in his lasting fellowship with Perotheus, "That felawe was unto duc Theseus/Syn thilke day that they were children lite" (I, 1192-3), and in his happy marriage with Ypolita. For Arcite, such a balance is impossible not because his love is evil, but because his behaviour reveals that excessive passion has impaired his reasoning powers. It is not the kind of love professed by Palamon and Arcite which causes the continued strife between the two knights and the threat to the general harmony prevailing in Athens, but the lovers' own conduct as it is conditioned by their inability to control their desires. For, in effect, the knights' love is as worthy as that between Theseus and Ypolita; but whereas in Theseus it becomes a bond of harmony, their love for Emelye, even though it is aimed at marriage, will create much pain, danger, and an eventual tragic death before a proper union is achieved. For reason, which enables Theseus to maintain constant balance and stability, is abandoned in the lovers' deadly quarrel. In the Romance of the Rose Lover consistently rejects Reason's advice, and the same happens in this poem, especially in the quick-tempered Arcite.⁶ Love, for him, has become law itself, indeed even greater: "Love is a gretter law, by my pan,/Than may be yeve to any erthely man" (I, 1165-66). In a way, Arcite's words reiterate man's natural urge to seek happiness and satisfaction in love, yet he excludes himself from partaking of that love represented by Nature in the Parliament of Fowls, for his extreme reasoning will not permit him to obey Nature's "statut", "governaunce", and "ryghtful ordenaunce".⁷ Loss of man's ability to negotiate with reasonable arguments leaves only

one alternative open--the use of force. And throughout the Tale, the enthusiasm of the two lovers, turns into a struggle involving the survival of the fitter.

Although the rival loves of the two knights aim at marital union, they differ from the kind of love practiced in Athens, where, under the relationship of Theseus and Ypolita, love is taken for granted as a unifying bond. The love of the alien knights is without measure, and is a constant threat to both the personal and the social harmonies:⁸ it creates dissension between noble sworn-brothers; it can make a man lament his release from prison and another risk his life by escaping; it compels a lover to foresake safety and native land to live in hardship and constant danger; it will develop into a conflict implicating two hundred knights from places as far apart as Thrace and India; and, after unending toll of time and strength it will leave a fervent follower bloody and desirous of death. Such are the consequences of love's uncontrolled power, and the constant ironic reminder in the Tale is not only that the pains of one lover are inevitably futile, but also that both lovers are in fact sparing no expense to win a lady who is not really interested in their loves.⁹ And the negative effects on the lovers caused by the blind force of such a love seems to be further emphasised by the Knight himself in his frequent use of animal imagery:

Thou myghtest wene that this Palamon
In his fightyng were a wood leon,
And as a crueel tigre was Arcite;
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte.
(I, 1655-58)

Theseus' discovery of the brutal love-struggle in the forest

is highly significant, for at this moment, the dilemma which in the hands of Palamon and Arcite had deteriorated to complete animal instinct, is presented with rational and concrete principles that look forward to an ordered solution. First of all, Theseus knows all about the hopeless pains and passionate desire of such a love, for in his youth, he too had served the god of Love:

"Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
 Who may been a fool, but if he love?
 Bihoold for Goddes sake that sit above,
 Se how they blede! be they noght wel arrayed?
 Thus hath hir lord, the god of love, ypayed
 Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!
 And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse
 That serven love, for aught that may bifalle.
 But this is yet the beste game of alle,
 That she for whom they han this jolitee
 Kan hem therfore as mucche thank as me.
 She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
 By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare!
 But all moot ben assayed, hoot and coold;
 A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold,--
 I woot it by myself ful yore agon,
 For in my tyme a servant was I oon."
 (I, 1798-1814)

There can be no mistaking the light cynicism and critical tone of the passage--the lovers are infatuated fools, the rules of their love ridiculous, the god of Love always unjust (these are more or less the same arguments Troilus used when he had scorned both lovers and the god of Love before he himself had become a follower). The speech is aimed as much at the lovers as at Theseus himself, for he recalls his own foolish youth before his love had found its proper place in the marriage to Ypolita. This implies that the solution to the knights' conflict can only be achieved when their love is controlled by a conjugal union. Yet there remains the

problem of who should marry Emelye, for, like the courtly eagles in The Parliament of Fowls, they cannot both possess the same lady. Theseus recognizes this problem: "Ye woot yourself she may nat wedden two/Atones, though ye fighten everemo" (I, 1835-36); and since both knights reveal near identical "worthinesse", the question of superiority between the two lovers becomes even more acute at this point.

As will be explained later in this chapter, the conflict arising out of the question of marital supremacy very often threatened the particular harmony that ought to exist in marriage.¹⁰ In "The Knight's Tale", the question of priority is present in another form: first of all, it exists outside of marriage, though leading to such a state; secondly, it is concerned with the respective loves of two knight-suitors for the same lady. But, as in married life, the problem of superiority in this tale has also developed into a serious threat, magnified many times beyond that present within wedlock, for the struggle between Palamon and Arcite in fact endangers the general harmony of a well-ordered society. Theseus attempts to solve the conflict by a test of skill in battle; it is quite ironic that peace should eventually be sought by an expedient so negatively yet vividly described in the temple of Mars (I, 1975-2050). However, as has already been explained above, it was by this same instrument of war that Theseus had achieved harmony between the two sexes and between husband and wife. Emelye, who is fully virginal in temperament, prays the goddess Diana either for a peaceful settlement, or else for the love of the knight who wants her most:

"And Palamon, that hath swich love to me,
 And eek Arcite, that loveth me so soore,
 (This grace I preye thee withoute moore)
 As sende love and pees bitwixe hem two,
 And fro me turne away hir hertes so
 That al hire hote love and hir desir,
 And al hir bisy torment, and hir fir
 Be queynt, or turned in another place.
 And if so be thou wolt nat do me grace,
 Or if my destynnee be shapen so
 That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
 As sende me hym that moost desireth me."
 (I, 2314-25)

Contrary to the expectation of the Athenians, though not of the reader, since, as already seen in Troilus and Criseyde, destinal forces play a very important role in the lives of lovers, it is Death that passes judgement. Chaucer substitutes the influence of astrology for the power of the gods (as is especially evident in the third book), and from the very beginning of the story it is suggested that there are planetary influences working over the lives of the lovers:

"Fortune hath yeven us this adversitee.
 Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
 Of Saturne, by som constellacioun,
 Hath yeven us this, although we hadde it sworn."
 (I, 1086-89)

And certainly, these words spoken by Arcite prove to be correct for, in effect, it is Saturn's malefic power that will eventually contribute to Arcite's death. Nonetheless, although Arcite's doom appears to be a capricious act, it is justified in terms of the romance. First of all, Arcite, in not being the first to claim his love for Emelye, has less right than Palamon for the lady's love; his death, therefore, helps to solve the pervasive conflict. Secondly, Arcite's magnanimity returns at the moment of

death, thus enabling him to reassert his proper relation with Palamon. Lastly, on the philosophical level, Theseus explains that human suffering proceeds under the ordered laws of a "Firste Moevere" who governs the term of existence in all finite things (I, 3027-40).

Theseus' final oration on the Chain of Love (I, 2987-3060)¹¹ leads to the happy marriage of Palamon and Emelye. The disorder initially caused by the power of uncontrolled passion is eventually cured by the marital love of Palamon and Emelye.

Apart from the lovers' intention to marry Emelye, the love story of the Knight follows most of the traditional courtly principles. It is in the final words of the Knight that the first concrete divergence from the code, as seen in the poems of Chaucer studied in the foregoing chapters, takes place:¹²

Bitwixen hem was maad anon the bond
 That highte matrimoigne or mariage,
 By al the conseil and the baronage.
 And thus with alle blisse and melodye
 Hath Palamon ywedded Emelye.
 And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
 Sende hym his love that hath it deere aboght;
 For now is Palamon in alle wele
 Lyvyng in blisse, in riches, and in heele,
 And Emelye hym loveth so tendrely,
 And he hire serveth al so gentilly,
 That nevere was ther no word hem bitwene
 Of jalousie or any oother teene.
 (I, 3094-3106)

Although the ethic of courtly love is modified rather than rejected--"And he hire serveth al so gentilly"--the perfect happiness between these two lovers is achieved by a marital union. And since, "jalousie" is also banished, it may safely be concluded that this relationship is what Boethius

had called, "an hooly boond. . . (a) sacrement of marriages of chaste loves".¹³ In that form of courtly love where the noblest relationship could only be either illicit or adulterous, its rules insisted on precisely the opposite values reached at the end of "The Knight's Tale": the mastery of the husband was considered as forestalling true love in marriage;¹⁴ the will to sensual pleasure was not aimed at by the marital obligation of procreation;¹⁵ the position of the courtly lady is reversed in marriage, making physical expressions of love a debt rather than a gift.¹⁶

The romance ends on the happy note of harmony achieved through the proper control of love between husband and wife, but it does not go beyond "and they lived happily ever after". It is in the "Wife of Bath's Tale" that the problem of the relationship between courtly love and life in marriage begins to take definite shape. The Wife of Bath is made to explain in great detail what, according to her personal beliefs, the ideal relationship between husband and wife ought to be. However, in this Tale, a new element is added, for, unlike "The Knight's Tale", the Wife's views are but one side of a larger theme. Apart from the blending of the courtly and conjugal systems, the Wife's Prologue and Tale provoke what Kittredge has termed "the Marriage Debate", in which the question of who should rule in the house is discussed in some detail by certain pilgrims.¹⁷ The Wife herself, both in her Prologue and in her Tale, reveals and ably advocates the sovereignty of wives over husbands. For a better appreciation of the themes in the two tales to be discussed--the "Wife's Tale", which started the discussion, and the "Franklin's Tale"

which brought it to a close--it is necessary at this point to review briefly some of the more important medieval attitudes towards the delicate and controversial topics concerning marriage and the relative positions of husband and wife.

During the Middle Ages, the normal assumption about the nature of woman would be that she was greatly inferior to man. Although a few women managed to make a name for themselves, the majority were oppressed and even denied the most elementary human rights.¹⁸ As to the position of women in marriage, even the more moderate anti-feminist writers agreed that while marriage itself was perhaps not evil, woman was from the time of Adam the principal instrument of man's undoing. St. Jerome, angered by Jovinian's doctrine that, other things being equal, a virgin was no better in the sight of God than a wife or a widow, attempted to prove him wrong by setting forth all the wickedness of women throughout the ages, and so provided the Middle Ages with a convenient compendium of anti-feminist literature. And the flood of misogynistic material, both secular and clerical, which was produced from the twelfth century on is truly impressive.¹⁹ Two things clearly emerge from these attacks: medieval man married for all sorts of reasons but not often for love, and the authority of the husband was paramount beyond dispute. In the first place, marriage was primarily an economic arrangement: contemporary records in England indicate a decidedly mercenary attitude towards woman as commodity.²⁰ Secondly, the relation of man and wife was regulated by the Pauline dictum that "the head of every man is Christ, and the head of every woman is the man."²¹ All the weight of Church and State were massed behind this doctrine.

From the point of view of the Church, Christian marriage was a sacrament and indissoluble. However, a valid marriage was indeed rare, for the impediments to wedlock were not only varied but very subtle.²² It became comparatively easy to discover an impediment if it became desirable to find one, and wives could be repudiated, exchanged, and put away with little difficulty. According to the teaching of the Church, the wife was the servant, though a certain amount of frequently abused reciprocity was allowed, and her duty was to bear children and make man's life tolerable. The State was probably even more unsympathetic towards the woman's role in society. In 1344 the English Parliament decreed that woman was by nature unfit to make a will, a resolution that merely re-stated the traditional prejudice against woman's ownership of property. She had neither the capacity nor the right to form a separate opinion, and a husband was considered both stupid and remiss in his duty to society if he did not control her suitably. The woman found herself caught between the two prejudices of Church and State, and it is therefore expected that she should manifest those very qualities for which she was condemned by the satirists: if she was materialistic and unscrupulous she needed to be, for very little was done in any quarter to safeguard her status.

The Wife of Bath is by no means happy about this status quo and strongly maintains that not only should women be given more freedom, but that in fact they should dominate men. Her biggest fault is that she is too much of a partisan; she proposes an alternative that goes to the opposite extreme of the traditional position. She enforces her doctrine by an account of her own past life during which she claims to have domin-

ated five husbands, and further illustrates her philosophy by the tale of the Knight and the loathly lady:

"Wommen desiren to have sovereyntee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love
And for to been in maistre him above."
(III, 1038-40)

Her solution is to reverse the traditional order--women must be superior.

The Wife's tale is a legend associated with the Court of Arthur, and its presentation includes elements from both the chivalric and the courtly systems. The first significant incident in the theme is the rape of the lonely maiden. There is no doubt that the knight has committed a crime against one of his own chivalric promises--his duty to protect and aid all women; and Chaucer does not minimize the seriousness of the act or of the outcry against such a deed:

He saugh a mayde walkynge hym biforn,
Of which mayde anon, maugre hir heed,
By verray force, he refte hire maydenhed;
For which oppressioun was swich clamour
And swich pursute unto the kyng Arthour,
That dampned was this knyght for to be deed
By cours of lawe, and sholde han lost his heed--
Paraventure swich was the statut tho. . . .
(III, 886-93)

According to the rules of courtly love as presented by Andreas, the knight had merely committed an indiscretion if the girl was of peasant stock.²³ But Chaucer makes no mention whether the girl was a rustic or not. In a scene which reminds us of the "Knight's Tale" where Theseus is implored by the ladies to spare the lives of Palamon and Arcite, King Arthur is also begged by the queen and other ladies to refrain from carrying out the sentence on the knight. Instead, the recreant knight is handed over to the

ladies' court where another form of justice is practised. Although Guinevere is herself a courtly lady, her court of love must not be associated with the entertaining tensons in those courts mentioned by Andreas.²⁴ In this case the crime is real; the court reaffirms the seriousness of the crime and its intention to carry out justice:

"Thou standest yet," quod she, "in swich array
That of thy lyf yet hastow no suretee.
I grante thee lyf, if thou kanst tellen me
What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren.
Be war, and keep thy nekke-boon from iren!"
(III, 902-06)

The determination of the queen as judge is especially evident in the last line of the above quotation; it seems as if the knight was about to give a hasty answer when the queen interrupted and advised heed and restraint. However, what is really relevant to the Wife and her theme is the nature of the demande d'amour: "What thyng is it that wommen moost desiren" (III, 905). Had the knight understood this basic principle he would not have committed the rape. So in a sense, the queen's justice takes the form of a lesson that the young man should learn rather than a punishment of execution; she wants to teach him, as the Wife wants to teach all men, that women are not only sovereign but insist on being sovereign. The knight's year and a day quest for the right answer ends in failure; he is however finally saved by the loathly lady:

"Wommen desiren to have sovereyntee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above."
(III, 1038-40)

The knight is unable to find the correct answer himself because even after

the quest he is still not convinced of women's sovereignty. This also explains why he is tested again by the dilemma presented to him by the hag.

The price he pays for the old lady's information is that he must take her as his wife. The knight, against his will and beliefs, must accept because he has given his word to grant the loathly lady's request. Now comes the most important and also the most interesting part of the poem, for at this point we see how the apparently incongruous systems of courtly and marital loves may, always according to the Wife's philosophy, coexist. The typically haughty courtly knight is not only disgusted with the thought that the old lady is to be his wife:

"My love?" quod he, "nay, my dampnacioun!
 Allas! that any of my nacioun
 Sholde evere so foule disparaged be,"
 (III, 1067-69)

but he also specifically accuses her of certain qualities which, according to the undemocratic aspects of courtly love, exclude her forever from such a code:

"Thou art so loothly, and so oold also,
 And therto comen of so lough a kynde,
 That litel wonder is thogh I walwe and wynde."
 (III, 1100-03)

The hag counter-argues from a Christian point of view and goes on to show in her long sermon (III, 1109-1212) that true nobility in a knight comes from the heart and not from the principles of courtly love.²⁵ She begins by answering the knight's last accusation: great possessions and inheritance of name and money do not make a man noble, for high-born sons often commit "shame and vileynye" (as indeed the knight himself had proved), on the contrary, "gentillesse cometh fro God allone" (III, 1162). Although

the loathly lady admits the other accusations, she not only goes on to show that neither poverty, nor old-age, nor ugliness are evil in themselves, but that in fact they may lead a man to true nobility; therefore, no honourable knight should despise anybody who possesses such qualities. Hoping that by the end of her exposition the knight has understood the meaning of "gentillesse" in the wedded state, she confronts him with a dilemma that proves to be his fundamental test. When the knight grants the old lady the sovereignty by allowing her to make the choice of whether he wishes

"To han me foul and old til that I deye,
And be to yow a trewe, humble wyf,
And nevere yow displese in al my lyf;
Or elles ye wol han me yong and fair,
And take youre aventure of the repaire,"
(III, 1220-24)

that is, when he freely admits within himself the mastery of women, he is truly rewarded, for he is now able to behold in his mind the wifely virtues of the old lady, symbolically represented by the transformation. This harmony between man and wife has been made possible by the hag's sermon on the qualities of a noble character, and instead of the once proud knight we have now the meek and obedient husband: "My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,/I put me in youre wise governance" (III, 1230-31). The conclusion is made according to the Wife of Bath's aim and doctrine, although expressed by the loathly lady:

"Thanne have I gete of yow maistrie," quod she,
Syn I may chese and gouverne as me lest?"
"Ye, certes, wyf," quod he, "I holde it best,"
(III, 1236-38)

which approximates very closely the conclusion of the Wife of Bath's

Prologue:

But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,
 We fille acorded by us selven two.
 He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,
 To han the governance of hous and lond,
 And of his tonge, and of his hond also;
 And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.
 And whan that I hadde gotten unto me
 By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,
 And that he seyde, "Myn owne trewe wyf,
 Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;
 Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat"--
 After that day we hadden never debaat.
 (III, 811-22)

The only difference is that Alisoun's Martian side of her character makes her fight to achieve dominance; but the message is identical: a wife should be free and dominant, and only then will she care for her husband.

Although there is no attempt to associate a wife's sovereignty with the lover's humble service in courtly love, the Wife of Bath ironically arrives at the same answer to the question of superiority as that practiced under the rules of courtly love. The solution satisfies both the Queen and the Wife of Bath, although for different reasons: the Queen stands for courtly love, the Wife stands for conjugal love. In this Tale the two divorced systems are brought together and meet over the question of nobility of character. As such it points forward to the "Franklin's Tale", where the ideal intermingling of courtly and marital love is finally expressed in the last story of the Marriage Group. In the Wife's tale, "gentilesse" has been used as a means to bolster the Wife's philosophy of superiority in marriage and not as a solution to the blending of the courtly and marital systems of love. This, of course, is in full accord with the Wife's char-

acter, for, her bourgeois nature would have lacked "the sensibility to grasp the implications of courtly love and 'gentillesse'".²⁶ Such is not the case in the "Franklin's Tale". In the story of Arveragus and Dorigen, "gentillesse" is the basic foundation for lasting resolution between the relations of courtly lovers and the duties of husband and wife.

From the Franklin's words in praise of the "Squires Tale", we immediately realize that what had mainly impressed him was the question of "gentillesse" (V, 673-94). The reason is obvious since he himself belongs to the gentle class and sincerely hopes that his ~~own~~ son could emulate the Squire. The Tale is to be a gentlemen's story, and he tells it like a gentleman, in spite of the Host's rude remarks. Furthermore, it not only corrects the extreme philosophy of the Wife of Bath but it also presents Chaucer's most harmonious view of courtly love and marriage as this is founded on a proper understanding and proper use of the virtue of nobility.

The story opens with an account of the wooing of Dorigen by Arveragus which is described in the traditional courtly manner and with the customary terminology:

Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his payne
 To serve a lady in his beste wise;
 And many a labour, many a greet emprise
 He for his lady wroghte, er she were wonne.
 For she was oon the faireste under sonne,
 And eek therto comen of so heigh kynrede
 That wel unnethes dorste this knyght, for drede,
 Telle hire his wo, his peyne, and his distresse.
 (V, 730-37)

What had previously been a situation that occupied hundreds of lines is dismissed in this poem in twelve.²⁷ For Arveragus is a new kind of lover--his service is rewarded not by furtive embraces but by lasting matrimony.

The lady, too, is detached from the earlier types:

But atte laste she, for his worthynesse,
 And namely for his meke obeysaunce,
 Hath swich a pitee caught of his penaunce
 That pryvely she fil of his accord
 To take hym for hir housbonde and hir lord.
 (V, 738-42)

This new solution, which reflects wisdom and freedom in both parties, differs substantially from anything that has so far emerged in Chaucer's poetry; it further challenges the courtly system which held that love and marriage were incompatible since marriage involves the male's mastery, and mastery drives out love.²⁸ But this is precisely where the major modification of both systems takes place. Church, State, and tradition all looked forward to Arveragus' mastery, but the newly-weds do not proceed according to any system. For, although they retain characteristics from both the courtly and the marital systems of love, the chivalric gentleman promises the lady that he would never assert his authority, but would content himself with the mere name of master, and continue to be her servant and lover as before. In return for Arveragus' "gentillesse", Dorigen promises to remain all her life his humble and true wife:

And for to lede the moore in blisse hir lyves,
 Of his free wyl he swoor hire as a knyght
 That nevere in al his lyf he, day ne nyght,
 Ne sholde upon hym take no maistrie
 Agayn hir wyl, ne kithe hire jalousie,
 But hire obeye, and folwe hir wyl in al,
 As any love to his lady shal,
 Save that the name of soveraynetee,
 That wolde he have for shame of his degree.
 She thanked hym, and with ful greet humblesse
 She seyde, "Sire, sith of youre gentillesse
 Ye profre me to have so large a reyne,

Ne wolde nevere God bitwixe us tweyne,
 As in my gilt, were outhere werre or stryf,
 Sire, I wol be youre humble trewe wyf;
 Have heer my trouthe, til that myn herte breste."
 (V, 744-59)

From the concluding words in the "Knight's Tale", such it seems might have been the marital relationship between Palamon and Emelye; "jalousie" is also banished, and the renunciation of all domination in favour of mutual concessions and forbearance might have guaranteed a secure and harmonious marriage.²⁹ Unlike the Wife of Bath, Dorigen did not need to assert her position by means of force; and, unlike the loathly lady, she did not need to preach a sermon, for Arveragus embodies the highest ideal of a noble lover and husband. The solution offered by the Franklin is based solely on love and noble behaviour. He rejects what is anti-social in the rules of courtly love precepts which, carried to their extreme, encouraged adultery; he retains however those noble aspects of lovers, such as devotion and unselfishness. He also rejects the mercenary and slavish side of the medieval marriage: neither party loses liberty, neither husband nor wife would be a thrall. And the Franklin digresses from the narrative to applaud at length the wisdom of this arrangement:

Heere may men seen an humble, wys accord;
 Thus hath she take hir servant and hir lord--
 Servant in love, and lord in mariage.
 Thanne was he bothe in lordshipe and servage.
 Servage? nay, but in lordshipe above,
 Sith he hath bothe his lady and his love;
 His lady, certes, and his wyf also,
 The which that lawe of love accordeth to.
 (V, 791-98)

But the harmony achieved is not immune from internal and external threats. Arveragus' courtly duty of seeking honour in the lists is the first

sign of danger, for his absence is not only linked to the "grisly rokkes blake" which begin to symbolize the menace that intervenes to prevent perfect happiness, but also contributes to Dorigen's vulnerable position under Aurelius' advances. The need for the physical presence of both lovers is one of the principles that overlaps both systems of love. We have already seen in the study of Troilus and Criseyde the effects caused by the absence of one of the lovers; even in a marital situation, the absence of Arveragus is a continuous threat to the harmony that exists between man and wife.

With the introduction of Aurelius, the Franklin's Tale all of a sudden reminds us of the Romance of the Rose and its influence on Chaucer's early poetry: the allusion to May and the garden "of swich prys,/But if it were the verray paradys" (V, 911-12); the model courtly lover, "servant to Venus" (V, 937), who suffers in silence for Dorigen's "mercy", passes sleepless nights, weeps, and composes "Songes, complaintes, roundels, vilelayes" (V, 948). The poem takes on a new perspective, for it becomes evident that marriage is to be the battleground between the old and the new kinds of courtly lovers.

Obedient to the rules of extra-marital courtly love, Aurelius woos another man's wife. Dorigen will have nothing to do with such love, and, in what the lover would consider treason to his religion, she firmly rejects him with "Ne shal I nevere been untrewe wyf/In word ne work, as fer as I have wit" (V, 984-85). But she whimsically promises Aurelius to yield on what she supposed to be an impossible condition--the removal of all the rocks from the coast of Britanny--while, at the same time she

scorns his courtly principle of making it his business to court other people's wives (V, 1003-05). Aurelius himself realizes the impossibility of the task set, although he would greatly desire to see the rocks break up the deep living relationship between husband and wife.

Dorigen's condition does not arise from the capricious and haughty nature expected of the courtly lady; her promise is motivated by the same qualities which make her love Arveragus; it is motivated indeed, by that love itself. Originally, Dorigen regards the rocks as an unreasonable creation of God, since they not only separate her from her husband but also because they pose a threat to his safe return. However, the rocks become a much more serious threat after her promise to Aurelius, for now, if the rocks disappear, so does the union between husband and wife. Thus, in the first place, Dorigen had mistaken the real significance of the rocks: her happiness will only last as long as the rocks are present. The element of magic, which reinforces the suggestion of evil evoked by the black rocks in Dorigen's illusion, comes to the aid of the woeful courtly lover, and the condition is fulfilled. Dorigen now realizes her mistake, for she is faced with breaking her promise one way or the other. Her first reaction is that she would rather die than be unfaithful to her husband and, for two days she ponders all the exempla of true wives who accepted death before dishonour (V, 1368-1456). But before she convinces herself that suicide is the only way out, her husband, who had been away for a short time, returns, and Dorigen, like the humble and obedient wife she promised to be, explains her intolerable situation. Arveragus proclaims that she must give herself to Aurelius for, according to his per-

sonal estimate of noble worth, "Trouthe is the hyeste thyng that man may kepe" (V, 1479). Needless to say, this decision seems somewhat jarring coming from a man "ful of rightwisnesse", but the narrator reassures the pilgrims:

Paradventure an heep of yow, ywis,
 Wol holden hym a lewed man in this
 That he wol putte his wyf in jupartie.
 Herkneth the tale er ye upon hire crie.
 She may have bettre fortune than yow semeth;
 And whan that ye han herd the tale, demeth.
 (V, 1493-98)

The pilgrims will eventually realize that Arveragus' decision is wise. The concept of "gentillesse" is a shifting one and not merely limited to the relative station of man and wife; in this precarious situation, it is expressed in relation to truth and honour: in the ideal husband Arveragus, it becomes coextensive with the concept of moral virtue, which, to the listeners, would have been identified with Christian ethics. There is no doubt that Arveragus' action is guided above all by the demands of his wife's honour:

"Ye shul youre trouthe holden, by my fay!
 For God so wisely have mercy upon me,
 I hadde wel levere ystiked for to be
 For verray love which that I to yow have,
 But if ye sholde youre trouthe kepe and save."
 (V, 1474-78)

His perfect justice inspires "gentillesse" in both Aurelius and the magician-philosopher, which, in turn, averts the tragedy when all else would have failed.

The Franklin's parting demande d'amour, while it reaffirms our

first impression of Arveragus' noble character, makes us reconsider Aurelius' final deed. That his act is generous cannot be disputed, although it must also be borne in mind that he had originally cunningly tricked Dorigen. Throughout the Tale he remains the ideal courtly lover, obedient to his principles, which, in relation to those of Arveragus and Dorigen are considered false. When he reminds Dorigen to fulfil her rash promise by the words, "Madame I speke it for the honour of yow" (V, 1331), he only shows further how limited and hypocritical his notion of honour is in comparison to that of Arveragus. This weakness, which in turn reflects the weakness of the whole courtly system, also helps to emphasise the rich and ideal relationship between husband and wife, a union that will not be wrecked by those principles which had contributed to the disaster of Troilus's love. In fact, the "Franklin's Tale" proves exactly the contrary: the harmony achieved by the generous conduct of the courtly lovers within the marriage bond not only transcends the relationship between a lover and his paramour, but its very noble attributes also prove so attractive as to succeed in converting misguided lovers to the proper life and to the proper understanding that should exist between man and woman. And this is the explanation behind Aurelius' final gesture: the virtues displayed in Arveragus' "gentillesse" and the perfect example of Dorigen's faithfulness have given Aurelius enough wisdom to prompt his one highly significant gentle action, and thereby to abandon his previous convictions. For, in deciding to release Dorigen from her promise, he helps to make possible what according to his former beliefs had been unacceptable; his action safeguards Dorigen's marital vow and it restores the threatened happiness between husband and

wife: "He cherisseth hire as though she were a queene,/And she was to hym trewe for everemore" (V, 1554-55).

Two closely related themes--courtly love and marital love--are common in varying degree and for various purposes to the three tales studied in this chapter. This, of course, is a major modification in Chaucer's subject-matter, for never before in his poetry had courtly love formed part of a marital framework. At the end of the "Knight's Tale", the teller introduces an ideal conjugal union which helps to restore the general and particular harmonies threatened by blind love; half way through the "Wife of Bath's Tale", a courtly knight is forced into an unhappy wedding; by the end of the story, the Wife's mouthpiece resorts to "gentillesse" to restore a balance favouring both the courtly and the Wife's philosophies; the "Franklin's Tale" opens with a partial departure from both the courtly and marital systems and culminates in an ideal reconciliation of the two, which, strengthened by the proper conduct of "gentillesse", proves itself invulnerable against all serious threats.

It becomes clear that a certain ordered thematic development in Chaucer's poetry takes shape in his treatment of courtly love, Christian love, and conjugal love, and the relation of each to the other. However, it would be both sweeping and dogmatic to conclude that the views expressed in his poems are therefore Chaucer's own personal beliefs. For, although his presence under one guise or another in all his poems inevitably links him to the respective themes, his frequent ironic objectivity keeps him apart, making it more difficult to interpret his intentions. The concluding observations will be devoted to the use of courtly love and its relation to the various roles of Chaucer in the poems that have been studied.

CONCLUSION

Chaucer's various roles in the poems studied above are not mere conventional techniques, for they help the reader to understand how his mind was working at the time of composition. Although in the Book of the Duchess and in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women Chaucer is not concerned with an exploration of courtly love, it is however interesting to note that only in these two poems does he ever project himself as a lover. In the Book of the Duchess he poses as an unsuccessful lover; in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, although Alceste does not exclude the possibility that the poet-lover may have had some success in love (G, 400-401), she nonetheless specifies that he does not really understand Love's service (G, 345). It may be possible that Chaucer decided to accept the convention of the narrator as himself Love's servant, precisely because in these two poems he does not question the values of courtly love. In those poems where courtly love is being judged, Chaucer adopts a completely different role.

In the Parliament of Fowls, Chaucer examines the nature of courtly love for the first time. In this poem, he contrasts courtly love to natural love, and although no side is overtly favoured, Chaucer's intentions become clear at the end of the debate where the courtly lovers, unlike the common birds who practice natural love, are not rewarded. As narrator and as a persona, Chaucer represents the guise of a man both skeptical

about the nature of courtly love (1-14) and also disavowing any personal experience in its affairs (8-11; 159-161). The overall tone of the poem also contributes to a better understanding of Chaucer's mind. The poet's mood in the final stanza is far removed from that of the initial stanza; he now seems to be relieved for not having followed Venus' religion and pleased for being able to comprehend the kind of love endorsed by Nature.

In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer's treatment of courtly love reaches a climax: he condemns the code as being false to man and to man's duties. The doubts he had in the Parliament of Fowls have been confirmed: the seriousness of the tragic ending and the final condemnation of the love story that had preceded, leave no doubt about Chaucer's attitude. This explains quite clearly why in this romance Chaucer places himself completely outside the god's fatal reach:

For I, that God of Loves servantz serve,
Ne dar to Love, for myn unliklynesse,
Preyen for speed, al sholde I therfore sterve,
So fer am I from his help in derknesse.
(I, 15-18)

Although Chaucer's only contact with love has been, in a sense, negative--the woes of unfulfilment, and the indirect understanding from "auctoritee"--the effect he creates is, I believe, that his mind is anxious about love. It is not surprising, therefore, that his persistent probing in his earlier works turns, in his later years, into a search for an ideal compromise between the courtly and the conjugal systems of love.

The structural framework of the Canterbury Tales presents added difficulties in attempting to explain the relation between writer and subject-matter, for, although Chaucer is the poet and also the narrator

of two tales, he frequently insists that:

For this ye knowen al so wel as I
Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
Everich a word, if it be in his charge,
Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe,
Or feyne thyng, or fynde wordes newe.
(I, 730-35)

His own two tales, although not intimately concerned with presenting a reconciliation between courtly and marital loves, are significant in their separate treatment of the two systems: in "Sir Thopas" he burlesques metrical romances, thereby also making fun of the usual courtly behaviour contained in such stories; and in the conclusion of the "Tale of Melibee", he moves away from the accepted medieval attitudes towards women. Prudence, who is also Melibee's wife, not only rebuts her husband's anti-feministic arguments, but is confirmed as a wise woman when her advice, initially rejected, is accepted by her husband.

What the poet introduces in the "Knight's Tale" is definitely a step away from the usual treatment of the courtly conventions. Although this tale still includes many of the earlier devices, it certainly looks forward in that it also is directed toward a courtly marital union. The "Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale" opens a very interesting debate on what the ideal marital relationship ought to be. Although Chaucer is all the time outside the debate, it is quite possible to conclude that he was endeavouring to give expression to a very sensitive sentiment of his age. The solution is clearly presented in the "Franklin's Tale" where courtly, Christian, and social standards are blended to achieve a happy marriage founded on true "gentillesse" innate in both husband and wife. Whether the

philosophy in this tale represents Chaucer's own final word on this question cannot be answered with any certainty, but, most readers familiar with his poetic development will find P. Hodgson's words appropriate in this context: "the poet has projected his own fairness and wisdom, his opinion on matrimony, his own tolerant, half-humorous appraisal of life."¹

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

¹Although the internal evidence does not establish the fact that the Man in Black and his lady are married, the poem is commonly accepted as representing the marital relationship of Duchess Blanche and Chaucer's patron John of Gaunt. Chaucer would most probably have known the Duchess in person when she was still alive.

²In the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women the god of Love accuses Chaucer of having translated the Romance of the Rose (G, 254). Scholars are still divided in their views as to how much of the extant translation assigned to Chaucer is authentic. Two eminent Chaucerian scholars, W.W. Skeat, The Chaucer Canon, 65 ff. and F.N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 565, both attribute only Fragment A to Chaucer. This portion (1-1705) ends in the middle of Guillaume de Lorris' contribution.

³For a study on the medieval theories of dreams, see W.C. Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences.

⁴All quotations are from the text of F.N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1957).

⁵Such a view is present in M. Galway, "Chaucer's Sovereign Lady", MLR, XXXIII (1938), 145-199.

⁶B.H. Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened", in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. by E. Wagenknecht, 291.

⁷G.L. Kittredge, Chaucer and his Poetry, 52.

⁸Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened", 278.

⁹Chaucer borrows the story from Ovid, but for structural and thematic purposes he rightly omits the final metamorphosis of the husband and wife into birds.

¹⁰Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened", 279, argues that the light passage (240-69) where the narrator tries to bribe the god of sleep is due to the relief that the narrator finds after having read Ovid's book.

¹¹

Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 267

¹²

For detailed studies on the principles of courtly love, see W.G. Dodd, Courtly Love in Gower and Chaucer, C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, and T.A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: a Study in Courtly Love.

¹³

John Lawlor, "The Pattern of Consolation in the Book of the Duchess", Speculum, XXXI (1956), 628.

¹⁴

The relationship between courtly and marital love will be discussed in Ch. IV.

¹⁵

Chaucer is in particular indebted to Machaut's poem, Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne. See Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 776, note to 816-1040.

¹⁶

Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened", 292.

¹⁷

Ibid., 293.

¹⁸

C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 169.

¹⁹

According to scholars, the two versions of the Prologue were written between 1382-1394. See Robinson's explanatory notes in The Works for the dates of the two prologues, 839. These dates approximately divide Chaucer's literary career in half, putting his age just over the fortieth year.

²⁰

I shall base my discussion on the G-version since it is generally accepted as the revised Prologue and therefore representing Chaucer's last word on the theme that he treats.

²¹

For the blending of the Christian and the courtly religions, see Dodd, Courtly Love in Gower and Chaucer, 18, 209-214, and Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 18-21.

22

See D.S. Brewer, Chaucer, 121, and M. Chute, Geoffrey Chaucer of England, 190.

23

J.S.P. Tatlock, The Mind and Art of Chaucer, 72

24

M. Chute, Geoffrey Chaucer of England also notes that, "according to Eustache Descamps, the prince of journalists, the leader of the cult of the Flower in England was Philippa of Lancaster, the daughter of John of Gaunt", 187.

25

The Floure and the Leafe and The Assembly of Ladies, ed. by D.A. Pearsall, 21.

26

Seven of the names mentioned in the ballad have their stories told in the Legend.

27

Tatlock, The Mind and Art of Chaucer, 72.

28

Robinson, The Complete Works, 481.

29

For a detailed comparison between the religious imagery in the F-version and that in the G-version, see D.D. Griffith, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's Legend of Good Women", The Manly Anniversary Studies, (1923), 32-41.

30

See above, note 21.

CHAPTER II

1

The narrator's sorrow in the Book of the Duchess (1-43) is most likely due to failure in love; in the House of Fame (I, 245-48) and in Troilus and Criseyde, the poet assumes the pose of a non-participant. In the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, on the other hand, Alceste's words do not exclude the possibility that the poet-dreamer might have had success in love: "Whil he was yong, he kept youre estat;/I not wher he be now a renegat" (G. 400-401).

2

In Troilus and Criseyde, the contrast between "pleyn felicitee" (V, 1818) and "worldly vanyte" (V, 1837) is further strengthened by the poet's own explicit judgement (V, 1835 ff.).

3

Certain critics have attempted to reconcile the morality of Cicero's book with the mundane concern represented by the birds. Such a view is put forward by R.C. Goffin, "Heaven and Earth in the Parliament of Fowls", MLR, XXXI (1936), 493-99, and by R.M. Lumiansky, "Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls: an Interpretation", RES, XXIV (1948), 81-89.

4

Such a dream is referred to by Macrobius in his Commentary on Cicero's Somnium Scipionis (i, 3,4) as a "somnium animale". W.C. Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences, 234 ff., also discusses this type of dream fully. The best and most concrete examples of the "somnium animale" are included in the Parliament of Fowls, 99-105. Chaucer's own dream in this poem is however also related to an "oraculum" since a prominent figure appears to him in his sleep; no prophecy is however involved.

5

Chaucer invokes Cytherea after experiencing the dream, since the poem is being narrated in retrospect.

6

J.A.W. Bennett, The Parlement of Foules, 69.

7

Dante's Inferno, III, 1 ff.

8

See above, note 1.

9

Cupid's genteel nature is described in Guillaume de Lorris' section of the Romance of the Rose, trans. by H.W. Robbins (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1962), 847-62.

10

Bennett, The Parlement of Foules, 84. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 121, also points out the respective roles of Cupid and Venus: "In the Romance Venus is the sexual appetite--the mere natural fact, in contrast to the god of Love who is the refined sentiment."

11

Bennett, The Parlement of Fowls, 91.

12

Alanus de Insulis, De Planctu Naturae, trans. by Douglas Moffat (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1908), 45.

13

In the Romance of the Rose, Venus is also represented as the enemy of chastity, urging folk, night and day, to "pluck roses":

When God had suffered Shame to come to birth
Assailed by sensualists was Chastity,
Who had been guardian of the buds and blooms
But now had need of aid--for Venus stole
Both day and night the roses and the buds.

(2837-41)

The mention of "Dyane the chaste" (281) in the description concerned with Venus and her temple is highly significant and will acquire further meaning in the birds' debate where the formel decides not to abandon the chaste goddess for the love represented by Venus.

14

Troilus does not receive this punishment, but his love was inordinate in as much as it disregarded marriage and procreation.

15

This explanation of Nature is based on Bennett, The Parlement of Foules, Chaps. III and IV. For other studies, see Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 94-106, and E.C. Knowlton, "Nature in Middle English", JEGP, XX (1921), 186-207.

16

Such a love is also practised by another bird, Chaunticleer in the "Nun's Priest's Tale":

O Venus, that art goddess of plesaunce,
Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
And in thy servyce dide al his poweer,
Moore for delit than world to multiplie
Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?

(VII, 3342-46)

17

For the role of Reason in Chretien's Lancelot, see Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 30. In the Romance of the Rose, Lover consistently rejects Reason's advice, 2971-3098; 6901-7230.

CHAPTER III

1

W.C. Curry, "Destiny in Chaucer's Troilus", PMLA, XLV (1930), 149: "In the Epilogue the artist drops into the role of a moralist". J.S.P. Tatlock, "Chaucer's Retractions", PMLA, XLIV (1929), 521, remarks that the last twelve stanzas are not connected to the rest of the poem.

2

Pandarus is especially untruthful about the events relating to the scene at the house of Deiphebus and also about those relating to Criseyde's invitation to his own house.

3

Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, ed. and trans. by J.J. Parry (New York: F. Ungar Publ. Co., 1959), 33-34, clearly prescribes that three outsiders may have knowledge of an amour--a confidant for the suitor, a confidante for the lady, and an intermediary through whom the affair may be conducted in secrecy and good form.

4

It is also significant that throughout the poem there are echoes of the 'betrayal' theme--Calkas betrays his native land; Pandarus betrays Criseyde on several occasions; Antenor who is released from the Greeks in exchange for Criseyde will also betray Troy; and, Fortune betrays the lovers.

5

It is the beauty of the lady that inspires the lover; this explains why the presence of the lady is of vital importance to the lover. Furthermore, since courtly love also emphasises the physical possession of the lady, it is natural that when separation occurs, the lover passes through a period of desperation. Even Andreas' "pure love" permits all bodily pleasures except full union, The Art of Courtly Love, 122.

6

Jealousy in husbands was to be deprecated, but in lovers it was natural and even required. Andreas devotes three precepts of the longer code to the significance and effects of jealousy in relation to love. Ibid., 184-85.

7

Andreas points out this precept in rule XIV. Ibid., 185. In Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, this sentiment is expressed by Crisseida, IV, 152 ff.

8

See above, Ch. II, note 17.

9

The bringing of the two lovers to bed for the first time at the house of Pandarus also differs widely from Boccaccio's, and the element of secrecy is emphasised further.

10

See above, Ch. I, 19-20.

11

Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae, Bk. II, metrum 8.
See Robinson, The Complete Works, 340-41.

12

The pagan Criseyde preferring "holy syntes lyves" should not surprise the reader since the poet is constantly blending Christian and pagan imageries. The purpose of this device is to keep the reader aware of the values that the lovers invert. Although the background of the story is pagan, the theme is approached from the medieval point of view.

13

Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae, Bk. II, Prosa 1-2, Metra 1-2. In these passages the writer describes the wiles and inconstancy of Fortune. This Boethian influence is especially evident in I, 841-54, and IV, 1-7.

14

Ibid., Bk. II, Prosa 1.

15

Ibid., Bk. II, Prosa 1.

16

Ibid., Bk. V, Prosa 3.

17

W.C. Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", PMLA, XLV (1930), 129.

18

W.C. Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences, 267-68.

19

The roles of the poet in some of his earlier works, and even to a large extent as narrator throughout this romance, always speak in terms which are either objective or at the most suggestive. In the Epilogue the identification of the two minds as one is more evident.

20

Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 197.

21

Ibid., 197.

CHAPTER IV

1

Donnell van de Voort, Love and Marriage in the English Medieval Romances. See the Introduction to this study.

2

John Wilcox, "French Courtly Love in English Composite Romances", Papers of Michigan Academy, XVIII (1932), 575-90.

3

Robinson, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 669.

4

Boethius' bond of love centers on this point. See above, Ch. III, note 11.

5

The institution of sworn-brotherhood dates from ancient history and was even a part of savage societies, but by the time it reached the chivalric age--as the Romances bear witness--it became a somewhat elaborate ceremony always followed by the swearing of a solemn oath.

6

See above, Ch. II, note 17.

7

See above, Ch. II, 30-34.

8

The confinement of the two lovers in a castle away from the Athenian society is significant in that it symbolizes an ostracism to safeguard the harmony existing in Athens.

9

This situation closely resembles that in the debate of the birds in the Parliament of Fowls where, the formel, too, is not really interested in the eagles' expressions of love.

10

See below, 85-92.

11

Theseus' long speech is strongly Boethian in influence. See Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae, Bk. II, metrum 8; Bk. IV, prosa 6, metrum 6; and Bk. III, prosa 10.

12

The Knight's conclusion (3099-3100) reminds us of the narrator's words in the Epilogue of Troilus and Criseyde, (V, 1842-44). This seems to imply that had the love of Troilus and Criseyde been marital instead of illicit, the ending of Troilus and Criseyde would have been similar to that in the "Knight's Tale".

13

See above, Ch. III, note 11.

14

See The Romance of the Rose, trans. by H.W. Robbins, 8455-8744.

15

See above, Ch. II, note 16.

16

The Romance of the Rose, 9412-16:

Whatever she may say, no woman likes

A husband who demands supremacy.

Love dies when seignory exalts its head;

Love cannot live or last except in hearts

That are emancipated, frank, and free.

17

G.L. Kittredge first advanced the idea that the tales narrated by the Wife, the Clerk, the Merchant, and the Franklin, are thematically connected in a discussion on marriage. See, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage", MP, IX (1912), 435-467.

18

A detailed study of woman's inferior position in the Middle Ages is presented in A.K. Moore's unpublished thesis, Studies in a Medieval Prejudice--Antifeminism. Vanderbilt University, 1943.

19

Some of the more famous anti-feminist writings which Chaucer knew and made use of are: St. Jerome's Epistula adversus Jovinianum; Jean de Meun's section of The Romance of the Rose; and, Eustache Deschamps' Miroir de Mariage.

20

See F.J. Furnivall's edition of Child-Marriages, Divorces, and Ratifications, EETS, 1897. Although these records are of a later age than Chaucer's, they help to show how even more wretched the position of woman must have been in the early Middle Ages. In G.G. Coulton, Chaucer and His England, and in M.A. Gist, Love and War in the Middle English Romances, secondary information may be obtained regarding woman's lot in the medieval age.

21

I Corinthians, vii.

22

For a detailed discussion and explanation of the impediments in medieval marriages, see E.E. Slaughter, Virtue According to Love in Chaucer, Chap. II.

23

Andreas, The Art of Courtly Love, ed. and trans. by J.J. Parry, advises knights who take a fancy towards a low born girl to be swift in their advances, and if necessary, even to use force in getting what they want, I, xi.

24

Ibid., "Various Decisions in Love Cases".

25

Chaucer's treatment of the arguments in the sermon seem to have been influenced by Dante's Fourth Tractate of the Convivio, Chaps. 3, 10, and 15. Robinson, The Complete Works, explains that "it was a commonplace of Christian literature", 704. Ugliness and old age were definite obstacles to a courtly love relationship; poverty inevitably led to the loss of love. See, Andreas, The Art of Courtly Love, I, v; II, vii. The personified abstractions Elde and Povert are also shut out of de Lorris' garden of Love in The Romance of the Rose; besides, all the courtly "vices" outside the walls are described as being hideously ugly.

26

Chaucer, The Preamble and Tale of the Wife of Bath, ed. by R.J. Beck, 35.

27

The courtly relationships in the Book of the Duchess and in Troilus and Criseyde occupy the larger part of both poems.

28

See above, note 16.

29

Jealousy plays a very important part in courtly love as may be seen from the prominent place she holds in the Temple of Venus in the Parliament of Fowls, 246-52. See also, Ch. III, note 6.

CONCLUSION

1

Chaucer, The Franklin's Tale, ed. by P. Hodgson, 14.

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